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ABSTRACT

Seven series of newspaper articles on effective elementary and secondary schools are presented. A brief foreword explains the theme of the articles--identifying what makes good schools work. The seven sets of articles include the following: (1) "Middle Schools: How They Change the Lives of Students in Montana," by Mea Andrews; (2) "How High Schools Serve Minorities in Texas," by Linda Austin; (3) "How Inner City Schools Work for Minority Children," by John McManus, on Philadelphia (Pennsylvania), New Haven (Connecticut), and Richmond and Portsmouth (Virginia) schools; (4) "From Coal Mines to Gifted Education in West Virginia," by Elizabeth Older; (5) "How Elementary Schools Work for Four Different Minority Groups," by Carol Rubenstein, concerning Asian, Hispanic, Black, and Native American children in Oregon; (6) "Schools That Work in 'Gold Coast' Towns," by Stephanie Sevick, on schools in three affluent Connecticut towns; and (7) "Schools That Serve the Gifted in Flordia," by Patricia Sullivan. Attached is a list of past Fellows in Educational Journalism. (RW)

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The Journalism Research Fellows Report:

WHAT MAKES THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS WORK?

Answers from the 1981 Journalism Research Fellows who report on schools that are working in:

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Diane Brundage, Editor

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Our special thanks to Frederick H. Schultz, National Council of Educational Research, P. Michael Timpane, Director, National Institute of Education and Tom Tomlinson and Peter Gerber, Senior NIE Associates, who first saw the need for and promise of this practical results-oriented approach to research via educational journalism.

FELLOWS IN EDUCATIONAL JOURNALISM: A DESCRIPTION

The articles in this report are based upon work done for the 1981 Fellows in Educational Journalism Program. Since 1976, the Fellowship has offered a select group of educational journalists a two to three-month program designed to strengthen the educational media by providing additional resources to working reporters and their news organizations.

The Fellowship is a unique opportunity for educational journalists to go beyond the local news of school board votes and teachers' strikes to undertake a comprehensive study of an issue of major significance to the schools and the society they serve. It is an individually tailored program in which journalists select topics of concern to them and their public to explore through site visits to relevant programs throughout the country, meetings with national experts and authorities, and exposure to current research and background literature. Individual study plans are supplemented by monthly Fellowship seminars that focus on educational issues of interest to the Journalism Fellows and provide time to share and discuss study experiences. In addition to stories based upon the Fellowship, which are published by the reporters' news organizations, the program publishes a monograph of Fellowship reports and articles.

Initiated by the Ford Foundation's Advisor on Communications, Fred W. Friendly (formerly of CBS News), and its Vice President for Education, Harold Howe II (former U.S. Commissioner of Education), the Fellowship is a novel, experiential approach to strengthening the educational media. By providing journalists with time and resources for study and travel, the Fellowship seeks to:

- encourage the development of a knowledgeable and effective education press, equipped to bring both analytical depth and nation context to local news coverage;
- provide experienced journalists with an opportunity to conduct a thorough analysis of an issue which will help to clarify and answer some of the questions facing the country's multi-billion dollar education industry.

The Fellowship is coordinated by The Institute for Educational Leadership.

FOREWORD

What makes the public schools work? That's the question—probably the most important and controversial question facing our nation as increasing numbers of citizens turn to private schools for their educational needs. To provide some clear and compelling reasons why some public schools work, the 1981 Fellowship in Educational Journalism Program sponsored by The Institute for Educational Leadership, with support from the National Institute of Education and local news organizations, asked seven of the finest education reporters across the country to conduct two-and-a-half month studies of schools which are working in their states.

Fueling the confusion about the public schools is the widely quoted work of James Coleman et al that found the private schools apparently educating some students more effectively. Not as visible to the public is a burgeoning accumulation of research indicating that students in some public schools are achieving unexpected success in the basic skills and other academic areas. However, while these unusually "effective schools" may be found anywhere, they are seldom locally reported and hence remain largely unknown either as examples for others to follow or as evidence that public schools can make a difference. Herein lies the mission of this year's program.

We sought to introduce the evidence and to provide local examples of its meaning through experienced and competitively selected education reporters, whose day-to-day job it was to tell their communities about their public schools. This volume contains the journalists' stories published by their news organizations in Texas, Connecticut, Oregon, Virginia, Montana, West Virginia and Florida. The stories describe the course followed by reporters as they set about the task of finding schools that worked.

In all cases the reporters determined for themselves where they would look and what they would say about their experience. Their search was guided by recent "effective schools" research on the characteristics of schools where students are achieving beyond expectations. The journalists learned about this research and other political and substantive issues at the Fellowship's group seminars and in individual consultation with experts across the country during a leave of absence from their papers.

The reporters found that the research findings about what makes an effective school were borne out in their journalistic investigations. Thus, these stories attest to the practical value of educational research in explaining the product of schooling.

Above all, this volume illustrates the very great professional talents of our participating journalists. We believe it also underscores the benefits to society of providing journalists with the time and resources to step back from daily deadline pressures to do intensive work and gain new and broader perspectives on important education issues.

Tom Tomlinson
Senior Researcher
National Institute of Education

Diane Brundage
Coordinator, Fellowships
in Educational Journalism

Missoulian

Missoula, Montana

August 30, 1981

First in a Series

Middle-school concept was the answer in Lolo

About this series

Education for early adolescents — "between-agers" who are no longer elementary students but not quite high school students — has been in a state of flux for years.

Nobody agrees on what intermediate-level children should learn, how they should be taught or what kind of school they should attend. Researchers have all but ignored the age group, and what little study has been done gives no clear-cut answers to educators searching for the best schools for these children.

Last school year, Missoulian reporter Mea Andrews visited five Montana schools where programs are geared specifically for intermediate-level students. Each of the schools had a reputation for being successful in tailoring an educational program for these students. The schools were chosen based on interviews of more than 50 Montana educators, parents and school watchers.

Though all five schools were different, a pattern emerged. Each school had strong leadership, a sense of teamwork and direction, a structured yet flexible environment in which students and adults learn and experiment, and school philosophies and goals that were well-defined and understood by all.

A five-part series on the changes, successes and problems in the schools Andrews visited begins today.

While touring the state, part of Andrews' salary and her expenses were paid by a journalism grant from the Institute of Educational Leadership, affiliated with George Washington University in Washington, D.C. The Missoulian paid one-third of her salary during the 10-week fellowship.

MEA ANDREWS

Mea Andrews has been the *Missoulian* education writer for two years. Prior to this assignment she covered city and school news for the *Medera Tribune* in California.

In the past two decades in Missoula, no educational issue has caused more emotional debate than the reorganization of the elementary schools. At the center of the controversy has been the middle schools: what should students learn, how should they be taught, and what kind of schools should they attend?

Amidst this ongoing education battle, Andrews chose for her Fellowship study the task of finding out what makes an effective school for sixth, seventh and eighth graders. She studied five successful schools throughout the state of Montana. The students came from a range of socio-economic backgrounds from a university community to a "tough" school on the other side of the tracks where more than half the students came from low-income families and twenty percent of the school population was Chicano.

Despite the differences in demographics, a clear pattern emerged from this study. Each school had strong leadership, a sense of teamwork and direction, a structured yet flexible learning environment, and well-defined philosophical goals.

By Mea Andrews
Staff writer

Joe Mirich pulls a handful of dice from his drawer and jiggles them in his hand. His sixth-graders gather round on the floor while a visitor sits in the middle of the group.

"This is called 'Petals around the Rose,'' says Mirich to the visitor. "I'm not going to tell you the rules and I'm not going to tell you how it's played."

He rolls the dice on the floor and asks the visitor, "How many petals do you see?" She shrugs. The students shout the answer — "Seven!"

Mirich tosses the dice again. Still no response from the visitor, but the students know the answer — "Two!"

Eight rolls later, the visitor is exasperated. She is 15 years older than these students and the game should be easy. Mirich shows no mercy and gives no hints.

Finally the visitor sees a pattern and guesses on the next toss. "Four petals," she says gingerly, and sighs with relief when the answer is correct.

"Now you know," said Mirich with a nod. "Now you know what it's like to be the only one without the answer, the only one who doesn't understand the lesson."

That game is Mirich's way of reminding adults just how frustrating learning can be. It also is a simple way to show teachers the foundation of "kid-oriented" classrooms.

"We teachers think we know so much, but we've been in front of the classroom too long," said Mirich. "We don't remember what it's like to be 11 or 12 years old. It pays to step back and remember the frustration, the feeling of being different, of being troubled, to be growing up."

Mirich's lesson in frustration would benefit teachers of all levels, but his own interests focus on the education of early adolescent students. Last year, he was a sixth-grade teacher in Lolo School District 7, where the intermediate school has become the emerging middle school of Montana.

A few years ago, Lolo teachers took a hard look at their work place. They found a small school with big-school problems: Too little teamwork and communication among faculty members, students and administrators; no sense of purpose or direction; and too much routine processing of students in the upper elementary grades.

There was no traditional junior high in place because Lolo is a small, one-campus district enrolling about 530 students in kindergarten through eighth grade. Nevertheless, Lolo teachers thought their upper-grade programs had assumed the negative elements of much-criticized junior highs and lacked the "kid-oriented" instruction Mirich applauds.

"We didn't want to be a mini high school," said Alice Kupilik, a social studies teacher at Lolo.

"The middle-school years are a whole period of life in itself. These kids are different, and they should be treated different. That is why high school people sometimes fail as junior-high teachers, or why junior highs have gotten a bad name — because we attempted to teach these students when we don't know anything about them."

Concerned about their students, the Lolo teachers decided to try a new approach to educating sixth- , seventh- and eighth-graders. They received a federal grant that allowed visits to middle schools in other states, and they came back to Lolo with enthusiasm and energy to make changes.

First, the staff set out to make Lolo Middle School a more positive place to be. Surveys, tests and self-evaluations had showed that Lolo's students didn't like school or themselves; that teacher-student relationships were suffering, and that staff members felt little correlation between school goals and actual practice.

A counseling program called "sharing and caring" was established and has become a model for other schools in Montana.

Each student in the school is assigned to an adult staff member, and all adults — including the principal, teachers and the school secretary — become group leaders for about 10 students. Once each week, the groups meet and talk about such topics as loneliness, friendships, communication with peers and parents or study skills. Students stay with the same adult for their three years at Lolo, and each group has students from all three grades.

"When students get to be in the seventh and eighth grades, they move from one class to another without any positive contact with an adult in the school," Mirich said. "When they are sick, they see the nurse. When they misbehave, they are marched into the principal's office. When they are in class, the teacher is boss and there's no time for anything but math and science and history.

"When do we get to know these kids as people? When do we say, hey, you are a person. Let's talk about something that's important to you, to your friends."

Staff members seem to like the project and generally students react favorably to the discussions. Scores on tests that gauge attitudes towards school have shown steady improvement at Lolo.

Though the group talks are flexible, the programs are planned in advance and usually the activities are structured and researched by staff members. Students make suggestions and often will carry the conversations to the playground or lunch.

Last school year, the sessions slipped too much toward "fun-and-games" for some group leaders' tastes — especially during sunny spring days. Staff members discussed the problem and agreed to keep a little tighter control over the programs in the future.

The counseling groups meet only once a week, but they were an important part of Lolo's revitalization. They were also accompanied by other changes, too. Teachers are trying to work as teams, coordinating their academic units with other subjects in the school. They have designed "mini-units" on special topics — energy, for example — that cross over into several subjects and involve all the students in activities, classes and discussions.

And Lolo educators have tried to mix academic musts with an increasing amount of flexibility, responsibility and personal choice for students. Students choose from some elective projects and courses, but must also fulfill the requirements of classes.

During a mandatory silent reading period held most every school day, students are free to choose their own reading material. It is not an absolute right — Erica Jong's "Fear of Flying" was confiscated from a sixth-grader — but there are seldom confrontations over the students' choice of books or magazines.

"Kids this age want to have a little say in their lives, they want to feel they have some control," said Avis Welton, counselor for Lolo Middle School.

"It's important for us to find the balance between too many rules and too little guidance," Welton said. "We can't let kids just 'do their own thing.' We have to make them realize that we care about their feelings, that they can share in the decision-making process and that they have some flexibility.

"Sometimes we let them be kids and have fun because that's very important right now. But sometimes we treat them like young adults — and that's important, too. At this stage, they are very much a combination of child and adult."

Mirich resigned from his Lolo job this summer to become a principal at a school in Idaho. Two other teachers also left, but the new teachers hired seem to have the same philosophical commitment to making Lolo a positive and successful place for students.

"We haven't lost any of the enthusiasm for what we've started," said Lolo teacher Orville Getz.

Second in a Series

August 31, 1981

Two middle schools in Helena are junior highs in name only

By Mea Andrews
Staff writer

HELENA — Ask most school administrators about "education" and the conversation will eventually get around to the "three Bs" — busing, budgets or buildings.

Ask John Monson about education and he talks about people.

"I can't control how much money I get, and I already have a building to work with," said Monson, principal of C.R. Anderson Junior High in Helena.

"What we are doing here has nothing to do with buildings. We are working on people, on their way of thinking and on their attitudes. That's where you either succeed or fail — the people."

Monson has joined the middle-school movement. He and his cross-town counterpart, Ervin Winslow at Helena Junior High, are trying to change the way Helena schools teach and work with intermediate-level students.

"Our name is still 'junior high' and that may never change," said Monson. "But we are already a middle school. We are not babying kids, we do not make excuses for them if they don't follow the rules. But we have given them room to explore, to learn and to be appreciated for what they do and contribute."

The changes have not come about overnight. Parents, school board members, teachers and administrators took years to plan and design a future for Helena's schools.

Eventually they came up with a five-year plan that included, among other things, a commitment to a four-year high school and intermediate-level programs geared for the seventh- and eighth-grade students.

Helena voters bought the idea in 1980 when they approved a $3-million bond issue, part of which is being used to expand the city's two senior highs. Ninth-graders, traditionally part of the junior highs, are gradually being moved into the high schools.

"It was a philosophical decision," said Helena school Superintendent Roger Eble. Helena trustees believed ninth-graders had more in common with the sophomores and juniors, and that their presence at the junior high forced younger students to mature too quickly. Seventh- and eighth-grade students need a program of their own — not one modeled after a senior high, Eble said.

In Montana, ninth-grade programs are governed by high school accreditation standards regardless of where the classes are taught. As a result, junior highs often found themselves with two staffs and programs — one for seventh- and eighth-graders and one for ninth-graders.

When classes, special programs and competitive sports were added for ninth-graders, the programs mushroomed and began including younger students — who got mini proms, cheerleaders and other high school-type programs of their own.

"Seventh-graders are not ninth-graders, and we ignored the difference," said Monson. "Moving the ninth-graders into the high school does not, in itself, change that problem. But we can now focus on the students who are left — the seventh- and eighth-graders in the middle school."

Traditional junior highs are not too popular these days. For the first half of the century they were the innovation of the education world, designed to bridge the one-teacher, one-class "mothering" atmosphere of grade school and the one-subject-each-period world of high school.

The experiment soured through the years as the original goal of a transitional program was lost. Like C.R. Anderson, junior highs became "junior" mirrors of senior highs, and students found an abrupt change in their elementary schooling when they entered the seventh grade.

Enter the middle school. According to one estimate, there were about 5,000 middle schools last year compared with about 500 in 1965.

Middle schools' popularity grew in part because educators were concerned about education for the early adolescents. But more often they were an administrative answer to declining enrollment, school closures, desegregation and shifting student populations — a way to shuffle students and use buildings most effectively. In some cases, there was little attention given to the heart of the school: Students and their needs.

Even today, estimates on the number of middle schools often reflect a grade pattern (usually seventh and eighth grades and at least one grade below) and say nothing about the quality of instruction in the classroom.

Monson doesn't buy everything middle-school advocates are selling. "You have to look at your community and take it from there," he said. Middle-school publications don't talk much about academics and "that disturbs me," he said. "Montanans want a strong basic skills program and we are not going to ignore that."

If nothing else, the middle-school movement has forced educators to re-examine their schools and the students they deal with. "That alone is a giant step," Monson said. "We have got people here (at C.R. Anderson) thinking about students again."

Monson has tried to set the tone for change at C.R. Anderson by first redefining the school's mission and philosophy. Not all his staff members are enthusiastic and supportive, but most have been willing to try.

Then came the administrative changes that Monson and others hope will turn the philosophy into reality.

Teachers have been grouped in "interdisciplinary teams" and their classroom assignments switched so they are near other members of their team.

Interdisciplinary teams are not new, but they have gained popularity with the middle-school movement. Monson sees those teams as a way to get teachers to share ideas and plans — to get them away from a narrow focus on their own subject and classroom.

Teams are made up of four teachers — one each from science, math, English and social studies. Teachers have common planning periods when they can talk about students, develop special projects and prepare lessons together.

The object is flexibility. Because teams will have coordinated blocks of time for teaching, they aren't limited to a one-period class. Thus a worthwhile — but two-hour — science film can be shown to students if the rest of the team agrees.

And teachers have more incentive to coordinate lesson topics or to share teaching responsibility. During a history unit on the Civil War, an English teacher can assign "The Red Badge of Courage" for reading and discussion, and a spelling list can include words from the Civil War era. Or math and science teachers can combine efforts to present a unit on gravity.

"Who says classes have to be 45 or 50 minutes, or that a science teacher can't teach spelling?" asked C.R. Anderson's Monson. "Tradition. It was time to step back and recognize that tradition was not working, that we had to break old habits."

Meanwhile, students have been assigned to "family" groups of about 110 students, chosen at random to represent a cross-section of students' ability and characteristics. For the most part, students in one family will have the same team of teachers for basic subjects.

Family groups are designed to give students a sense of belonging, to provide a better climate for building friendships with peers and to encourage a personal relationship with teachers. "It creates mini-schools inside a larger school," said Monson.

At the same time, teachers are better able to keep tabs on students' progress in all subjects, and there is more opportunity for knowing students as individuals, Monson said.

The curriculum includes one period for non-graded, short-term "mini-courses" designed to introduce new ideas and skills in non-traditional subjects. Among the students' options are horse management, calculators and metrics, map reading, chess, archery, current events, medical self-help, energy and environment, and even riflery.

"Schools have to be safe, they have to be reasonably clean, free of distraction, and there has to be structure and rules and regulations," said Bob Miller, assistant principal at C.R. Anderson. "But there also has to be some flexibility within those rules to make schools human instead of factories."

Monson admits that not all his goals for C.R. Anderson have been reached. "But we've come a long way," he said. "Our kids are happier, our parents are pleased with the changes. Teachers are taking on more responsibility for the product we produce — and it's a good one."

Schools' success isn't measured just by the students' test scores

By Mea Andrews
Staff writer

Montana educators say they often feel frustrated in their quest for "better" intermediate-level education as scientific research on "effective" schools almost exclusively has dealt with primary grades.

Much of that research -- most notably that of Harvard's Ron Edmonds — suggests that a highly structured, no-nonsense, teacher-centered approach to lessons will dramatically improve test scores of primary students.

But whether Edmonds' research on grade school children can be translated without change to the intermediate grades is unclear. Montana educators who have spent years teaching, studying and working with early adolescent children say the formula must be reworked in the upper-elementary years.

"Second-graders come to school bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, anxious to please and in love with their teacher," said Hal Hawley, resident expert on intermediate-level education in the state Office of Public Instruction.

"That changes by the time they reach sixth or seventh grade. By then, kids are questioning authority, spreading their wings, toeing the line. They are moody. They are obsessed with being accepted, with making friends and with their changing bodies. They don't know if they like themselves or school, or if school means anything," Hawley said. "Junior high kids are different than second-graders, and their schools must be different, too."

It is easy enough to gauge students' ability to figure a math problem or understand a written paragraph, Hawley said. "But the ability of a seventh-grader to communicate, to get along with his peers, to graciously listen to another person's point of view, to analyze information — those are skills we want our children to acquire — but we can't test them with a pencil-and-paper test."

One person who has spent a great deal of time looking at intermediate-level education is Joan Scheff Lipsitz, director of the Center for Early Adolescence in Chapel Hill, N.C. In her 1977 book, "Growing Up Forgotten," she found schools for early adolescents "dreary, unimaginative, and routinized places."

Recently Lipsitz has studied the inner workings of four successful intermediate-level schools in both rural and metro communities. She is now writing a report and book on her findings.

Like Montana educators, she tends to define "good" schools for early adolescents more broadly than high scores on national achievement tests.

"To me, there is a difference between an 'effective' school and a 'successful' school," says Lipsitz. Successful schools have "staying power," the ability to be successful year after year not only in academic areas but in maintaining a healthy, positive and productive school climate.

In the four successful schools studied, Lipsitz found coherent and well-developed policies and philosophies about intermediate education and school goals. She found principals who wear "very few blinders" and "don't accept the given as given." She found professional and growing relationships among teachers, between teachers and administrators, and between adults and students.

Lipsitz also found schools with the kind of flexibility Helena's C.R. Anderson Junior High is trying to develop.

Third in a Series

September 1, 1981

Teachers are the key at Lockwood

By Mea Andrews
Staff writer

LOCKWOOD — "I want you to take 40, add another 40, add 30, double that, divide by 22, square the result and divide by 4," barks Allan Labbe with barely a breath between his numbers.

"Twenty-five," shouts an excited eighth-grader whose mind had silently clicked off the step-by-step answers. "Good job," lauds teacher Labbe. "Next."

Two more students step to the front of the class.

"Take 15, multiply by three, double that, double it again and divide by 18," says Labbe, again reeling off the numbers with hardly a pause. In seconds comes the answer from another eager student: "Ten."

"All right. Good thinking," says the teacher. "See you all tomorrow."

And with that, another math class at Lockwood Junior High near Billings comes to an end. The game is "contest," played without paper or pencil so that students must use their minds while standing on their feet.

"It brightens up their day a little, gets them away from looking at numbers in their books, reading problems on a blackboard or listening to me," says Labbe.

"When we first started, they couldn't add three numbers without writing them down. Now they can do the figures in their head as fast as I can talk."

Spend one day in Lockwood Junior High and you will hear about Allan Labbe and his end-of-the-period "contest" battles. Or students will tell you about writing a first-person essay for Mrs. Pinch, a great history project they did for Miss Robinson or how tough (but exciting) Miss Mogen's science classes are.

"Lockwood is just the best," eighth-grader John Bell declares without hesitation. "It's the teachers. They all care about us, and show us they care all the time. They are strict, but they are fun. Sometimes we say they are too hard — but I think kids really don't like a teacher who is easy. We can tell."

Bell says that Lockwood teachers are good because they know their subjects and can make class interesting. They demand performance. Although teachers do not need to be "one of the kids," they need to be friendly and understanding — and "it helps if the laugh," says Bell.

There is little room to argue that a school is only as good as its teachers. Lockwood, it seems, has managed to attract a bright, highly motivated and dedicated staff that sets the school apart.

That hasn't been a simple task for any school, especially Lockwood. Not too long ago Lockwood was known as "Poverty Flats," a quasi-community where poor folks could find cheap land and even cheaper trailer courts. Lockwood had a reputation for "being a bunch of pig farmers, rough and dirty," recalls one veteran teacher.

The area has boomed in recent times thanks to Billings families who built homes there to escape the city's bustle. New businesses — most notably an oil refinery — sprang up in Lockwood and provided a much-needed tax base that benefits Lockwood School District 26.

Even so, the bulk of Lockwood's 1,200 students — 320 at the junior high — still come from low- to middle-income families and the high turnover of students remains a challenge to teachers.

Lockwood parents have always demanded the best from their schools and their attentions have paid off. The school's scores on national achievement tests rival those of Billings' more affluent schools.

"There's a bit of the old fashioned left out here," says Duane Christensen, whose five children have all attended Lockwood schools.

"We have some wealthier families but most of us are just hard-working, honest folks who scrimp to make ends meet. We take a lot of pride in that school. If the teachers weren't good, we'd know about it and you can bet we'd make a scene."

Teachers at Lockwood have a unique sense of family not often found in other junior highs. That feeling exists in part because of the leadership of Principal Bob Leone. But it also thrives because Lockwood teachers want the school to shine — and because most of them prefer teaching junior-high aged students.

"We don't pay as much at some levels as other schools, so we can't keep teachers forever," says Leone. "But we always search for the best and the brightest. And if they don't like junior high kids, they don't get a second glance."

Schools of education train teachers for elementary and high school jobs but seldom prepare teachers for the special and trying problems of "between-agers" — students between elementary and high school who are sometimes very grown up and sometimes very childlike.

Only a handful of states — Montana is not one of them — have special endorsements for middle school or junior high teachers. Too often the teachers who end up in junior high jobs are biding time until more prestigious spots open at the local high school.

In a recent study, Ronan Middle School Principal Jerry Pauli found that 56 percent of the middle school and junior high teachers in Montana felt they weren't prepared for teaching pre- and early adolescent children. And 60 percent said they would like to see a middle-school endorsement available to teachers in Montana.

Coupled with the lack of training for this special group of students, teachers are also frustrated by the lack of research on junior high and middle school programs. Extensive research has been done on so-called "effective" elementary and high schools, but little light has been shed on what makes good schools for 11- to 15-year-olds.

"One minute these students act like children and the next they'll amaze you with their maturity," says Leone. "They want freedom but need structure; they need to make choices but cry for guidance; they demand responsibility but sometimes can't do the job.

"Most of us can't remember what it's like to be that age, so we get impatient. That is probably the biggest problem for teachers — finding the patience and keeping their sanity," Leone says. "It takes a certain kind of person to teach in a junior high because there aren't many rewards."

Coming to Lockwood was like "dying and going to heaven" for history teacher Sue Robinson, who spent several years teaching in inner-city schools.

"I was impressed when I came and am still impressed today. These kids have a rare school."

Standing before her students, Robinson may wave her arms, exaggerate her voice or tell a corny pun in flamboyant style. "Teaching is a little bit showmanship, and there's a little bit of the actress in me," she says.

"I'm honest. Sometimes students have to do a little rote memory work; sometimes they will have to listen to a dry lecture. They've got to learn that life isn't all fun.

"But add a little flamboyance every once in a while and you can get them hooked."

Labbe agrees. "Teachers have to get students' blood going, their minds working," he says. "It isn't easy, believe me, especially with junior high kids. But nobody ever told me teaching would be easy."

Though a dedicated and proud bunch, Lockwood teachers are not without gripes.

Many do not fancy the senior-high emphasis on sports that has percolated to the junior high level. They are irritated that students are excused from science or reading for a track meet, and that some teachers are hired more for coaching ability than classroom excellence.

Lockwood teachers also worry that educators, as a group, are letting junior-high students off too easy because "they have so many problems" or because "they can't handle the material yet." A science teacher who demands correct spelling on a term paper becomes the "heavy" with students unless other teachers demand the same.

And teachers sometimes tire of having to be surrogate parents, disciplinarians, police officers, counselors and babysitters — roles that become more pronounced at the junior-high level than in elementary grades.

"I spend half my time teaching kids how to act," complains Lockwood teacher Jim Sayler. "I think we make too many excuses for students. If we expected more they would do more."

Parents, while more and more critical of teachers and their work, do not do much to help, say Lockwood teachers. Junior high students are yanked from school for shopping sprees, dental appointments and family trips — just at the age when they should be learning responsibility. Teachers are then expected to stay after school to provide makeup sessions and extra help.

And a teacher who gives too much homework may be called on the carpet for asking too much, Lockwood teachers say.

"Parents are taking the kids' side more and more, especially in this age group," laments Dave Todd, a Lockwood teacher for 28 years. "Our hands are pretty well tied. If we speak a little rough we hear about it. Yet we're expected to work wonders.

"Teaching has a different position in society now. We are no longer looked up to, our opinions no longer matter as much. It's damn frustrating."

Fourth in a Series

September 2, 1981

Priorities at Billings' Riverside were backward

By Mea Andrews
Staff writer

BILLINGS — Seven years ago, John Dracon walked into his new office ready and willing to fight.

He knew the school's reputation before he took the job. Riverside was the "tough" school of Billings, the junior high on the proverbial "other side of the tracks." It was probably the closest thing Montana had to an inner-city school. More than half the students come from low-income families and more than 20 percent are Chicano.

The school was in trouble when Dracon took over. Riverside's scores on national achievement tests ranked well below the national average and were the lowest of all junior highs in Billings School District 2.

Most of the Chicano youth living in Billings go to Riverside for seventh, eighth and ninth grades. About 95 percent of them also dropped out of high school before their senior year — a fate some said was sealed at the junior-high level.

Discipline problems consumed much of the Riverside's energy, and staff morale was at an all-time low. Teachers didn't stay much past 4 p.m. and some were afraid to leave the building alone. Vandalism was such a problem that guard dogs patroled the building at night.

As incoming principal, Dracon was convinced that Riverside's problem was rooted in attitude. If students didn't like Riverside, it was because Riverside didn't like students.

He set out to make changes — changes that were not easy. Immediately he shifted the school's priorities from "office, teachers, students" to "students, teachers, office."

That proved to be the opening line in what can only be called a success story for Riverside Junior High.

These days, Dracon does not talk much about his impact on Riverside. He has moved up to the central office as curriculum director and is reluctant to sing his own praise. But the staff at Riverside still speaks reverently about Dracon.

"He literally turned this place around," says Jim Eschler, who was an assistant to Dracon and who carried on Dracon's philosophies as principal of the school.

"The superintendent used to say, 'If you don't shape up, we'll send you to Riverside.' Coming to this school was a threat, a punishment.

"Now kids want to come to Riverside," Eschler says. "This school likes kids, we want them to succeed. That attitude has paid off."

Two years ago, for the first time, national achievement scores for Riverside Junior High were above the national average.

Vandalism is no longer a major concern. The cost of replacing broken glass alone has dropped from $1,500 a year to less than $500 a year.

And today, 65 to 70 percent of Billings' Chicano youths graduate from high school. Changing conditions in the Billings and Hispanic community accounted for some of the improved dropout rate, but many credit the schools — particularly Riverside after Dracon's influence — for changing students' attitudes towards education.

Riverside's secret? No single thing, to be sure. But certainly the change that has had the most effect on the school has been a succession of principals who are "instructional leaders" with definite ideas about education — people like Eschler and Dracon.

Eschler has now been transferred to another junior high in Billings, but his work at Riverside will be continued by Lynette Little, former assistant principal at the school. She plans to fine-tune what Dracon and Eschler started.

Riverside's philosophies are easy to understand but hard to implement.

First, the school has only a few rules, but the rules are well-known and punishment is swift. Swearing, for example, is never tolerated, and infractions always end in three swats from a wooden paddle, a discipline tool Riverside parents applaud.

Second, Riverside believes that all students can learn, regardless of their home life, background, childhood, race or sex. Sometimes the school can provide creature comforts: a pair of mittens on a sub-freezing winter day or some money for a hot lunch. But school is for learning, and any excuses for not learning are unacceptable.

And Riverside teachers expect students to learn, to attend class, to try. When the bell rings, students must be in class because "they can't learn in the halls," says Eschler. Research on successful schools has shown that teacher expection is directly related to student achievement. Teachers who expect their students to learn will see results, but pupil progress is slowed when teachers do not believe their students can improve.

Third, Riverside believes that schools are for students, not teachers or parents or administrators. Junior high students need flexibility, but they also need structure, according to Riverside teachers.

Fourth and most important, Riverside is a school that believes all students should experience success. Many things that happen in the school are based on that concept. For example:

- Students' programs are specially tailored for both their academic and social needs. A problem with math? Into the math lab. A problem with English? Into the English lab. A problem with weight? Into the physical education class for overweight students.

- A small group of otherwise troublesome or troubled students are given daily work contracts. Students pick up a "contract" each day, and every one of his or her teachers must rate the student on such things as attendance, attitude, homework and attention in class.

At the end of the day, the student turns in the card to the principal or another administrator. A bad "grade" in any area may mean some penalty — extra school work, in-school suspension, after-school chores. A good day brings praise.

Only a few students need this kind

of reinforcement. But for those students, the daily feedback works, Eschler says. "I'm sneaky," he says. "If it works, I'll use it."

- Riverside — along with other junior highs in Billings — tries to give students choices. But students cannot boycott the "basics" because "academics are still the mission of this school," says Eschler.

In their six-period day, Billings seventh- and eighth-graders have five required classes: English, reading, math, social studies and science.

Teaching English and reading as separate classes is unusual at the upper-grade levels. Billings educators decided years ago that students who could not read would not be successful in other subjects or grades. So, they decided to keep the reading requirement even in junior high.

"Just because this age group needs some room to experiment doesn't mean schools can ignore the basics." says Eschler. "We are still here to teach 'readin, 'ritin and 'rithmetic.'"

- Riverside has shown some innovative use of federal money. Instead of hiring full-time teachers for federal Title I programs designed for low achievers in math, English and reading, Riverside has opted to hire classroom aides. Most of them have college degrees and teaching experience.

Title I money goes further that way, Riverside staffers say. Ten or 11 aides can be hired in place of a few teachers, and more students can be helped by the program. In most schools, students who qualify for Title One tutoring are pulled out of regular classes. But at Riverside, most Title One students stay in their regular math, English and reading classes, while aides help classroom teachers by working with the low achievers.

If one compares the 1974 Riverside to the Riverside of today, there is no doubt that a better school has evolved. But nearly all teachers interviewed cited a new concern. Said history teacher Debbie Carlson: "Maybe we've gone too far."

Recognizing that sentiment, new Principal Lynette Little has said that "tightening the academic belt" is one of her goals for this school year — not only for students but for teachers as well.

"We really have to push students a little harder, apply some gentle pressure," she said. "And I'm a person who believes teachers should be in classroom with their students. No more coffee breaks in the middle of class. They know I'm not asking anything that is not right."

No 'hushing' here

By Mea Andrews
Staff writer

BILLINGS — Riverside's library is not a musty room where books rest undisturbed on shelves. It is an oasis of sorts.

And Riverside's courtyard is an oasis indeed. Once slated for blacktop and benches, the courtyard now has a pond, rabbits, chicken, wild ducks, trees and grasses respresenting a broad sample of Montana's natural wonders.

Both were developed and continue to exist for one group of people — kids.

Tennis-shoe-clad Glenda Bell runs the library, where "books are friends" but filmstrips, movies, extra-curricular activities, animated and colorful displays and students are just as important.

Riverside students used to request a book and a library worker would pull the book off the shelf, recalls Bell. No browsing. No playing. No talking. Only serious, hush-hush kind of work allowed.

"It was a place where a cough or a sneeze would disturb the atmosphere," says Bell.

No longer. The library is open before and after school and during lunch for chess and checkers, browsing, research, socializing. The "quiet buzz" of students chatting makes Bell happy.

"If you have too strict an atmosphere, you end up forcing library work down their throats," says Bell. "I want this to be a good, happy place for students — a controlled atmosphere that's not too strict but not too distracting."

Bell's library doesn't stop at the door. She constantly lobbies teachers to make use of the library for special classes and research projects, and she has been successful.

To Bell, a librarian with a flair for statistics, it all means that more students enjoy the library and more students are reading.

In 1974, for instance, Riverside students each checked out an average of 14 books a year. That has grown steadily every year until in 1979, the average was 21 books per student. The estimate for this past year was 24 books.

And in 1974, the average student came into the library 37 times and the total visits for all students was 28,052. In 1980, the average student visited the library 93 times and the total number of student visits was 54,080.

"If a kid wants to read, we'll do everything in our power to get him the material," says Bell. "If he doesn't want to read, we'll do everything to get him into the library" — and reading will come later, she says.

Only a few yards away are glass doors through which Riverside students often stare at the wildlife in their school courtyard, a self-contained ecological system. No one quite knew what to do with the courtyard until Riverside science teachers decided to turn the place into a living wonder.

With left-over money from student funds, donations from local businesses and gratis work from staff and community people, the courtyard was planted and stocked with animals, foot paths were defined and covered with bark, and labels were set in place to identify grasses and trees.

Now science students chart the seasons' effects on plant life, monitor the birth and growth of animals, and scrutinize at least seven native Montana grasses and any number of trees and bushes. Art students cart their pads and pencils into the courtyard to capture details of a rabbit's fur or sunlight on a tree.

Fifth in a Series

September 3, 1981

'Precision teaching' helps North Junior High

By Mea Andrews
Staff writer

GREAT FALLS — Wayne Day's math students sit quietly, their desks clear except for an open folder.

"I think you guys know how the system works, so lets get going. We've got a lot of work today," he says, moving to the front of the room to click on a tape recorder.

When a beep interrupts the music, students begin writing as quickly and deftly as they can on plastic sheets that cover their test papers.

Exactly one minute later the music is interrupted by another beep and students stop working. "Let's try again," says Day.

Day and his students at Great Falls' North Junior High are experimenting with "precision teaching," or "PT," a teaching tool that has already gotten rave reviews in the city's elementary and high schools.

Here's how it works: Teachers set aside a few minutes of class time — usually on a daily basis — for students to do one-minute worksheets. The sheets are specially prepared to coordinate with curriculum, lessons and skills being covered at the time.

Each student has his or her own progress chart which is kept in a folder in the classroom. Students take the mini tests, correct their own work and enter their scores on the chart. They repeat the same worksheet until their scores show they are ready to move to another drill.

Students can see exactly when and how they are improving, and teachers get daily assessments of students' learning.

"Drill and practice has gotten a bad name in education, but there is something to be said for the technique," said Richard Clement, principal at North Junior High.

"Too often we introduce skills and concepts and have no way of knowing which students have grasped the lesson. We move ahead, introducing new skills and new concepts when the old ones aren't firm. PT gives everybody immediate feedback and keeps students from getting lost in the shuffle."

Precision teaching started down the street from North at Sacajawea Elementary School, where Clement was once principal. It originally was designed to bolster the academic performance of handicapped students.

But when Sacajawea teachers saw how effective the tool was for special-education students, they decided to try the technique on all their students.

It worked so well that thousands of educators in at least 30 states and two Canadian provinces are now PT instructors. Federal education officials investigated precision teaching and dubbed the method "outstanding." Precision teaching also has undergone a tough evaluation by Montana's Office of Public Instruction, which validated the project as an effective tool to teach and strengthen academic skills.

Precision teaching does not, as the words imply, change a teacher's style of lecturing or teaching. It is a paper-and-pencil, highly structured way of getting students to practice skills over and over until they improve.

During one social studies class at North Junior High, students were given an unmarked map of western Europe. The PT drill asked students to identify all the mountain ranges and bodies of water they could: the Norwegian, North, Baltic, Adriatic and Mediterranean seas; the Artic and Atlantic oceans; the Strait of Dover and the Strait of Gibraltar; the Bay of Biscay and the Gulf of Bothnia; and mountain ranges from the Balkans in Bulgaria to the Pyrenees in France.

And a civics unit involved another test that drilled students on concepts such as self-incrimination, ex-post-facto law, due process, double jeopardy, perjury, libel and writ of habeas corpus.

On first try, students get few correct answers. But by repeating the tests several times in several days, students' scores improve and they soon start seeing almost perfect papers — at which time they move to the next topic sheet. Since all the tests last the same time, students take the test together but may not be working on the same skill sheet.

Junior-high teachers in Great Falls were motivated to try the precision teaching because it worked so well for elementary students. A four-year study comparing achievement on a national tests showed Sacajawea students scoring higher than district averages — even though the school's scores were average when the study began.

At the end of the four-year period, Sacajawea fourth-graders were scoring 28 percentile points higher in spelling, 44 points higher in math and 19 points higher in reading than the district average.

North Junior High teachers who started precision teaching last year say students retained information and skills longer than before, although a long-term statistical evaluation will be the final test of success. Such studies have already been done on Great Falls' high school and elementary PT efforts.

In Ogden, Utah, one teacher has already documented PT's effect on one group of intermediate-level students. Janice Cashmore, who teaches English at South Ogden Junior High, says the tool works.

For a master's thesis, Cashmore selected two similar groups of ninth-graders to monitor. One group was taught by traditional methods, while the other classroom teacher added PT drills to supplement instruction.

One year later Cashmore compared results from both groups and tests they took at the beginning and end of the experiment. The control group showed no significant progress in capitalization and punctuation, the two skills she chose to isolate.

But the students who had been drilled by precision teaching showed a 334 percent improvement in capitalization skills and a 414 percent improvement in punctuation skills.

"As you can tell, I'm very excited," she said. "Kids can pick up concepts and master skills with precision teaching faster than any other tool I've tried. And it is a tool, not a method — any teacher, regardless of his style or background, can plug it in and get results."

Training teachers in PT is one of many changes taking place at North Junior High. Like other schools serving intermediate-level students, North is struggling to make school a place where social and emotional growth happens alongside academic improvement.

It has not been easy in Great Falls, where schools have been plagued by cutbacks.

Years ago, Great Falls School District 1 faced a painful but realistic problem. Enrollment had dropped — from about 19,280 students in 1970 to 14,650 in 1978. The merging of the Northern Pacific and Great Northern railroads left many rail workers jobless or transferred. Anaconda shut its zinc operations and cut its work force by 1,100 workers.

Left behind were schools with too few students — a luxury Great Falls could no longer afford.

Four elementary schools were closed in 1979. More than 100 teaching positions were eliminated and nearly 200 people affected by massive staff changes and cuts.

Last year, another 62 teachers were notified that their jobs were being cut. RIF, an acronymn for "reduction in force," is a process Great Falls teachers know too well.

Staff morale has suffered. "We used to have a sense of teamwork, a sense of togetherness," said one industrial-arts teacher at North last year. "It is all gone. We fear for our jobs, we fear for our future. It is very difficult to give 110 percent to any student right now."

"It is not a pleasant situation," admits Principal Clement. "We are always putting out brush fires."

Nevertheless, North has continued to look at improving its product and school. "Exploratory" time has been added for students — one period during which they can choose different activities, visit teachers for extra help or work on assignments.

North's staff has started a mini series designed to expose students to new ideas and interests. The program tries to tap the educational resources available in the community by inviting local speakers to organize activities for students.

The series has been popular. Three hundred students signed up for a karate demonstration, 150 signed up for a dance workshop, 100 attended a workshop on sign language and 80 turned out to listen to a local sportscaster. When a local veterinarian came to school, 130 students came to listen.

One good thing about North Junior High these days is that the school is less crowded than in the past. Years ago, when enrollment approached 1,300 students, North Junior High found itself herding students through school. "They were just thrown into the classroom and were expected to survive," says counselor Chuck Fuller. "That was an intolerable situation."

The opening of a new junior high in Great Falls in 1970, and the steady drop in enrollment since then, has eased that pressure. North's enrollment is now less than 700 students. "Much better," says Principal Clement.

Montana educators interviewed for this series say that big is not best, particularly in the intermediate years of junior high. When enrollment pushes 1,000 students, individuals get lost and the emphasis is on order, not education.

But Clement says that too few students may not be good either. "Some place there is a happy medium where you have enough students to offer some variety but few enough to make school personal," he said.

Dallas Times Herald

Dallas, Texas
May 24, 1981

First in a Series

Good principals the keys to effective Texas schools

LINDA AUSTIN

Linda Austin, a recent recipient of the Golden Typewriter Award for Education from the Dallas Association of School Administrators, has been education reporter for the *Dallas Times Herald* since 1979.

When Linda joined the staff of the *Times Herald*, Texas educators and politicians, accustomed to dealing with rural problems, were just starting to come to grips with the ills of urban education. Texas now has three cities among the ten largest in the nation.

As her Fellowship study topic, Austin chose to seek out inner-city high schools which served large numbers of black and Hispanic students. She identified several effective schools in poor areas where there has been considerable progress.

The message that comes from Austin's four-part series is that public schools can provide educational opportunities if the necessary commitment from the teachers, school administrators and parents is made. She found that the faculties and students in these effective schools shared some common traits: enthusiasm, industriousness and unrelenting determination to achieve educational progress.

Dallas high school students' scores were among the worst in Texas' eight urban school districts on a state minimal competency test last year. On a local test, almost one-third of the students in grades 8-12 proved illiterate. In an attempt to learn why some schools in Texas do a better job, reporter Linda Austin spent 10 weeks and traveled more than 10,000 miles to interview hundreds of educators, students and parents statewide. Her study was aided by a grant from George Washington University's Institute for Educational Leadership. This is the first of four articles.

By LINDA AUSTIN

Staff writer

HOUSTON — The ninth graders in Olivia Wilkins' English class studied "Romeo and Juliet," Greek mythology and "The Odyssey" this school year.

"They say I'm the meanest teacher on this campus," says Ms. Wilkins, who teaches at an integrated high school on Houston's heavily industrialized east side. "Nobody's excused during my class period. I won't have any interruptions in my 55 minutes."

She assigns homework nightly. Of her 104 students, 28 are in a special class for poor readers. All but three retook and passed the district's literacy test after a year with her.

"I've missed one day in five years," Ms. Wilkins says of her time at Ebbert L. Furr High School. "I enjoy coming to work. Otherwise, I wouldn't drive 33 miles a day to work here."

She sums up the reason for that trip and her students' achievement in two words: David Yeager.

"There is nobody like David Yeager," she says of Furr's principal. "He's an honest and fair principal. There's no little clique (of teachers) that he runs with. He treats us like adults, not children. I don't know where I could have more freedom."

Joyce Mikolajewski, whose son is a Furr ninth-grader, says she and her truck-driver husband "love Mr. Yeager. He's just about the best thing that ever happened to Furr."

Within the past decade, researchers have confirmed what teachers and parents have known for a long time: You have to have a good principal to have a good school.

"We never found an effective school presided over by an ineffective principal," says Ronald Edmonds, a Harvard University researcher who studied 55 effective elementary schools in the Northeast.

"An effective principal is a necessary but clearly insufficient prerequisite. We did find ineffective schools with effective principals."

Last summer, when Dallas' scores on the state's minimal competency test ranked near the bottom among urban school districts, Supt. Linus Wright immediately shifted 40 principals, who were "mismatched" and "burned out."

"The principal is the most important person in the management team and in determining the effectiveness of a school. Their leadership establishes expectations," Wright says.

At Furr, teachers and parents point to Principal Yeager as the reason the school works as well as it does. And for an urban high school drawing kids from poor to blue-collar neighborhoods, it works reasonably well.

EBBERT L. FURR

— Staff photo by Paul Iverson

Teachers and parents agree: 'There is nobody like David Yeager,' principal of Houston's Ebbert L. Furr High School

Houston principal eliminates homeroom

On standardized achievement tests, its students' scores almost reach the national average by the time they're seniors. Two-thirds of Furr's ninth-graders passed the state's minimal competency test, compared to half the ninth-graders in Dallas.

Teachers and students brag that Furr is perfectly integrated. Its racial breakdown is similar to the overall composition of the Houston (and Dallas) school districts. Of its 1,139 students, 44 per cent are black; 31 per cent are white, and 25 per cent are Hispanic.

Yeager doesn't make excuses for his students because many have to work, either to support their families or their cars. "I try not to know much about their homes for this reason: when they get out in the real world, no one's going to make an allowance," he says.

Yeager, whose down-home manner is hard to resist, says, "I try to be firm, fair and friendly, but it has to be in that order." His office is an unrushed, unhurried place, decorated with a plaque from his alma mater, Texas A&M University.

He's spent much of his 50 years in the Houston public schools, graduating from them in 1948 and joining the district in 1955 as a physical education teacher and coach. He became the 20-year-old school's second principal in 1973.

"I'm the manager, the filter, the philosopher," says Yeager, who has the impish grin of a leprechaun and the build of an unsuccessful college halfback. "I have to mimimize the things they come up with that take away from instructional time."

To that end, he's done away with daily homeroom, the 15 minutes of time many high schools use to take care of paperwork. He's stopped students from changing schedules between first and second semester.

"That takes away three weeks of disruption at midterm," he says. The only changes are for students who fail academic courses: They drop an elective and retake those courses.

"The most important thing a kid gets here is an academic education," Yeager says. "Electives are fine, but electives are extra. They repeat to get academics, even if they double."

Doubling — or taking two periods of the same subject — is technically against district policy. But Yeager has a reputation for bending the rules of the Houston Independent School District. Jesting that he runs his own

Milby English teacher Evelyn McNeil reads to class of seniors, who had worn graduation gowns to school for a group picture. Mrs. McNeil (Milby class of '29) returned to the school in 1962.

school district, his office staff gave him a stamp that read, "Furr ISD."

Furr teachers go home at 2:35 p.m. instead of the regulation 3:15 p.m. because Yeager requires them to spend up to eight hours a week on the phone talking to parents. Any time a student is sent to the office or is absent four days, the teacher calls home.

"I think that's done more for community information than anything else," he says. "We're averaging 800 to 1,000 calls every 9 weeks. . . I think you get better results if, when you ask teachers to do something extra, you give them something in return."

Yeager makes clear what he expects from teachers and students. "I don't like surprises. That's why we have a teacher handbook. I want them to know everything expected of them. I meet with each class at the beginning of every year in the auditorium and go over the rules in the student handbook," he says.

"I have teachers give them in writing the requirements of the course and classroom procedure."

Librarian Reid Whitelaw says, "Turnover is very low. People find it a pleasant, non-bureaucratic atmosphere to work in. Yeager is very supportive and encouraging. He doesn't bury us in triviality and petty administration."

The teacher attendance rate at Furr is among the highest in the district — almost 98 per cent, compared to 95 per cent districtwide.

"Teachers don't lay out. The atmosphere is such that it's no sweat to come to school and teach," Yeager says. "I try not to hold them up with extra things such as faculty meetings.

"You can't get on the P.A. and say 'Ya'll do this or else.' You can't crack a whip and make a teacher do," he says. "I trust them."

History teacher La Verna Ward says, "He's quite frank. If you do something he dislikes, he lets you know. As a result of his being frank, it's like a big family. He's just like one of us."

Across the ship channel from Furr is Milby High School, with a principal as reserved as Yeager is outgoing — and just as effective. He is Claude H. Brinkley Jr., Milby's third principal in its 55-year history. Brinkley came to Milby in 1962 as a biology teacher and coach and moved into the principal's office in 1971.

In some ways, Milby has not changed much under Brinkley's leadership. Students still turn out for a monthly dance in the cafeteria. The seniors — all 550 of them -- pose for a group picture. For some, Milby is a family tradition; their parents and grandparents trod the same wooden floors in the East End school.

Lawrence Smith, who has taught English at Milby for 21 years, says, "Through the years, so many schools declined. We have not. Twenty years ago, there was no great status in being at Milby. But we survived the last 10 to 15 years better than other schools. We had administrators who were top notch."

In the last decade, Milby has changed racially and physically. Ten years ago, Milby's student body was 86 per cent white. Today, it is 62 per cent minority, mostly Mexican-American.

Two years ago, a $10 million vocational wing doubled the square footage of the school. The school's enrollment has swelled to 2,500, as students districtwide flock to its 32 vocational programs, ranging from marine engine repair to petrochemical lab technique.

With all the changes, Milby's achievement test scores slumped. But this year, they show signs of rebounding.

In reading, scores for the school's seniors have jumped from the 35th percentile last year to the 46th percentile this year, meaning they read better than 46 per cent of the students nationwide who took the test. The national average is the 50th percentile.

Using the same test, Milby's students perform 15 to 20 points higher than those in Dallas high schools with the same racial mix.

"I think that in my job here the one thing I need to do is create an educational atmosphere where kids can learn. The way to do that is with good discipline," says Brinkley, a quiet, erect man with a shock of gray hair.

Brinkley's observations are supported by Harvard researcher Edmonds who found that a quiet, safe and orderly atmosphere is characteristic of effective schools.

"If you're fair, you can enforce the rules," says Brinkley. "That's the only way to have any type of order — enforce policy, regardless of who it is, even if it's a cheerleader or a star basketball player."

"I think people respect him," says Kelley Weygandt, student council president. "He's reasonable. I think a lot of people see him as God."

Besides enforcing Houston's two-year-old attendance policy, which Dallas emulated this year and which fails students with seven absences, Brinkley also provides incentives for good attendance on the theory that kids can't learn unless they're in school.

"We had a reception after first semester for 400 kids who had perfect attendance," Brinkley says. The homeroom with the best attendance received free pro basketball tickets. Attendance is up about 1 point from the 93.5 per cent attendance rate last year.

He also encourages competition in academic areas. "We had a contest in FOM (remedial math classes) and Algebra I. We gave them all the same test. The class which had the highest score was recognized in the school newspaper and received a certificate," says Brinkley, whose office bookcase is laden with old loving cups and yearbooks.

"You have to have high expectations, high standards of conduct," he says.

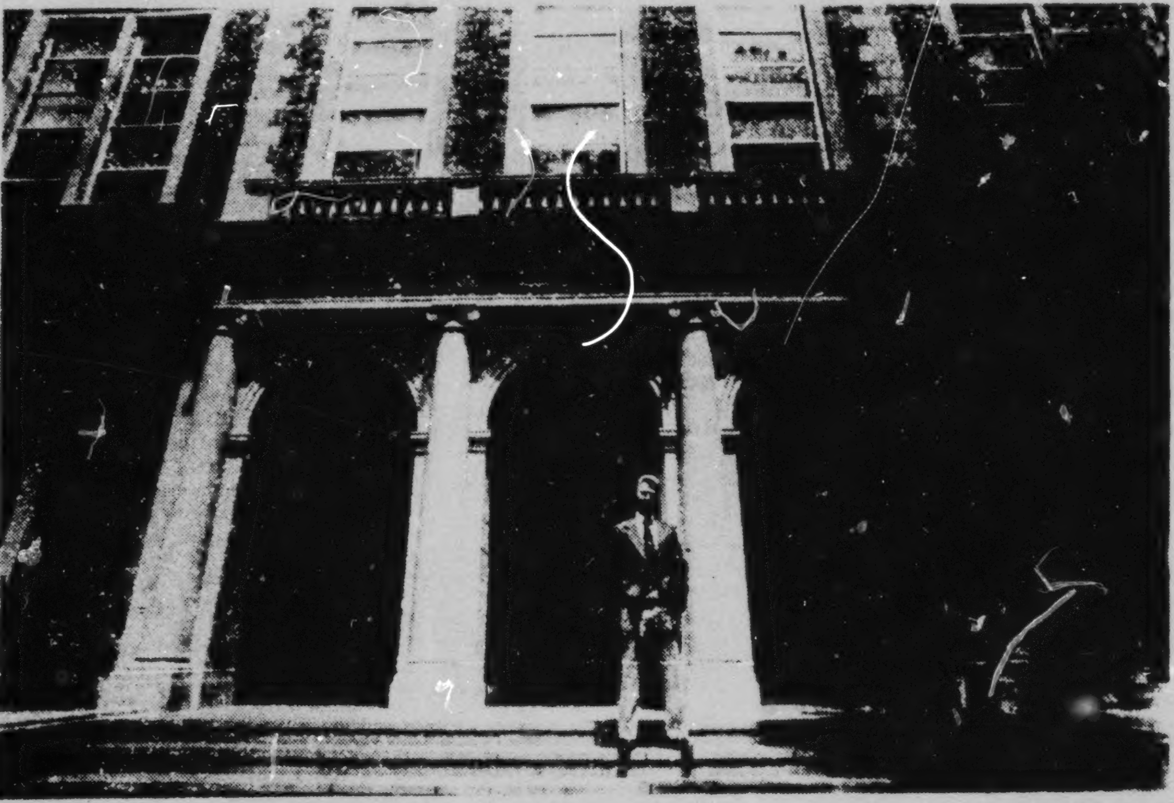
Along with maintaining discipline, securing good teachers is the principal's responsibility. "Personnel selection is probably one of the most important jobs that a principal has," Brinkley says. "We have a lot of exceptional teachers. The way we're able to do that is that a lot apply for a position here."

English teacher Linda Alsup explains why she sought a job at Milby instead of at the three high schools within 10 minutes of her home. "He's an extraordinarily fair man," she says. "If you say makeups (tests) are to be taken within two days and the kid doesn't, other principals would go ahead and let the kid take it. As long as you're fair and the requirements are clear, he has no problem backing you up."

"The thing you have do is trust your people," says Brinkley, who's not beneath taking a few jabs in the annual faculty-student basketball game.

"That creates a lot of respect and trust for you. If a teacher tells you something, don't question that. Nine thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine times out of 1,000, you'll be right. You can't go around questioning and doubting people for the one time you get burned. When you get burned, deal with that."

English teacher Ellen Merrick came to Milby this year from a rural Canadian school. "I was hit twice there. Here there's not a kid who would



— Staff photos by Paul Iverson

Claude Brinkley is only the third principal in the 55-year history of Milby High School. He came to the school in 1962 as a biology teacher and coach and moved into administration in 1971.

even conceive of that," she says in her classroom, its walls decorated with posters of Shakespeare and the rock group Led Zeppelin "I've never worked for a man I respect more. I hope I can be as fair a teacher as he is a principal.

"Mr. Brinkley stopped me the other day and said, 'You don't send many kids to the office. I appreciate your taking care of your own discipline problems.' That made me feel 20 feet tall I thought nobody notices, nobody cares."

Walter Hinojosa, a vice president in the Houston teachers' union and the Houston Jaycees' pick as outstanding young high school educator, says, "I have no problem going to Mr. Brinkley and talking over a problem. He'll work something out. I rarely have to go beyond the building. That makes it tough to recruit union members."

Milby teacher Paul Koons, who has had three children graduate from the school, says, "Mr. Claude Brinkley makes this whole system go. He has rules, and the rules are enforced. You know what's expected. He wants results — not excuses — and he gets them."

Second in a Series

May 25, 1981

Do-your-own-thing school returns to basics, thrives

By LINDA AUSTIN

Staff Writer

AUSTIN — Lyndon Baines Johnson High School opened in 1974, a rambling white brick monument to the educational innovations of the past 15 years.

While its founders called it "a community of people working together toward more humanistic education," teachers in Austin's other high schools derisively dubbed it Camelot.

LBJ was so far out it had something called the "discipline solar system." It bought into all the latest fads: open classrooms, team teaching, reality therapy, individualized instruction, learning stations, learning contracts, learning packets. Homework was out; monthly classes in yoga and candle-making were in.

Lois Sheffield, a counselor since LBJ opened, says, "Some of the programs were pretty bad. Some worked well, but the trend in education was toward the more structured."

Mirroring the shift in the nation's public schools, LBJ's philosophy has changed from do-your-own-thing to back-to-the-basics in just seven years.

"We've retrenched 50 per cent," says Ronald D. Beauford, LBJ's first and only principal. "This is really a traditional school with a few open classrooms."

Open classrooms, huge open areas with "centers" for each subject supervised by different teachers, became a trademark of innovative public education from the mid-'60s to mid-'70s. Students would learn what they wanted at their own pace, making "continuous progress."

If they didn't learn what they were supposed to, they would move on to the next grade anyway, free of the pressure of failure or competition and in keeping with a policy of social promotion.

The consequences are well-known: schools without standards became schools without learning.

In Dallas, where the public schools embraced the same educational fads as those tried and abandonned at LBJ, almost one-third of the high school students are functionally illiterate, according to scores on the district's minimal competency test last year.

Nationally, while elementary school students are reading better, teenagers read no better today than teens in 1971, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

"Standards slipped," says Searle Crate, a physics teacher at LBJ High. "Now they've stabilized. Discipline is better. The students had lost the responsibility for learning."

Math teacher Linda Berg says of the LBJ's early years, "It started out as a zoo. There was no teachers' lounge, no teachers' bathroom. Teachers and students were equals.

"There was no discipline under the old way. Now there are rules and regulations. Teachers are better able to operate," she says.

Math teacher Sandra Seymour says, "You can't vote about what you're going to teach. Kids can't always have a voice."

Principal Beauford says he didn't like the innovations of the early '70s either, but that the times made them necessary.

"The original idea was to humanize education. Students should have an opportunity to walk into my office and feel like someone would be fair. Faculty members should be a part of the decision-making process. When we desegregated the school system, if we hadn't gotten into human development and communications skills, we were going to have riots and fights," says Beauford.

Even with human relations activities, LBJ didn't have an easy time when it opened, two years after court-ordered desegregation.

"I put out 25 students in one day the first year," says Beauford, who carried a Mace-like spray during those days. "People were afraid to go to the potty. . Now it's secure and safe. There are no longer dice games in every restroom, with extortion going on.

> *'There was no discipline under the old way. Now there are rules and regulations. Teachers are better able to operate.'*
>
> Linda Berg, teacher

— Staff photo by Paul Iverson

Lyndon Baines Johnson High School Principal Ronald D. Beauford stands in the center of a crowd of his students

Principal says students must receive constant 'pushing'

"To educate any group of people, you must get control first. It must be a secure place to go to school. I deplore wasting time on human development when kids need to be in the classroom learning basic skills," says Beauford, whose office floor is littered with hubcaps, returned by a student who stole them. "But without human development, we never would have been able to get back to the basics."

The strategy paid off. LBJ won the state math championship last year and the regional math and science fair for the past two years. With a 57 percent minority — mostly black — enrollment, its average score on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), taken by half its seniors, remains two points above the national average of 890, boosted by a strong showing in math.

English teacher Lynn Morris says of her colleagues, "The math teechers are probably the most straight-laced. They make their kids do math every night. Their classes are probably the most structured, but I honestly believe that's best for kids."

"A kid is not going to do a blooming thing unless you push him all the time," says Beauford, who sometimes teaches a biology class in addition to his principal duties. "Still he must feel you respect him and love him as a fellow human being."

After nine years of study, Michael Rutter, who followed 2,700 students through 12 inner-city London high schools, reached much the same conclusion.

"Children had better academic success in schools where homework was regularly set and marked, and where the teachers expressed expectations that a high proportion of the children would do well," he writes in his book, "15,000 Hours."

"Of course, in turn, the children's good work will tend to reinforce and support the teachers' high expectations of them... The same mechanisms apply as much to behavior as to scholastic success."

Supt. Linus Wright says educators' low expectations for minority children "was and has been a problem" in the Dallas schools. "But I think we're turning that trend around."

Beginning this year, Dallas public school students in grades 1-3 must know certain things before they can pass to the next grade. By 1984, students at all grade levels will be promoted on the basis of achievement instead of age, ending a decades-old practice of social promotion in the Dallas schools.

The Dallas school board also increased the number of courses required for graduation, beginning in 1985.

"It's always a matter of expectations. Kids live up to a teacher's expectations," says Carolyn Legorreta, a science teacher at Bowie High School in El Paso. "I'd like to see it change a bit so we don't get so many lower-level courses that we don't need. The kids can perform. I do think they're pampered."

Almost two-thirds of Bowie's incoming freshmen go into remedial reading courses. Surrounded by public housing and literally across the street from Mexico, Bowie High educates the newest and the poorest of El Paso's Mexican immigrants.

Yet in just one year at Bowie, Ms. Legorreta has increased the enrollment in chemistry classes from 30 to 120, her department chairman says. "A lot of teachers who started teaching here," Ms. Legorreta says, "foster — not intentionally — the idea that the kids can't do it. When I got here, I decided to teach biology the way I've always taught it and not go a step down...and they performed very well."

— Staff photo by Paul Iverson

Barbara Roberts, a social studies teacher, works with students in an open classroom at Lyndon B. Johnson High in Austin.

At Milby High School near Houston's ship channel, reading teacher Lauretta Abram says, "You can spoonfeed remedial children too much... You're doing them a disservice. They have minds. They can think if they're made to think."

At mostly black Sam Houston High School in San Antonio, business teacher Shirley R. Adamek says, "The lower you make your standards, the less they'll do. The more you demand, the more they'll do. It doesn't pay to demand nothing. They'll do less than nothing.

"Sometimes adults have to make decisions. They have to raise standards to where they ought to be and not bring standards down to meet them," she says.

When asked about raising academic standards in her class, she says, "Until it's universal, why fight it? It's got to be schoolwide to do any good."

Using computers, Mary Smith drills Sam Houston students who read and compute like elementary school pupils. "I don't think they've been pushed to do it. For years, we've passed kids on the bare minimum," she says.

"These kids are capable of so much, and we expect so little."

Third in a Series

May 26, 1981

Effective teachers push students to their limits

By LINDA AUSTIN

Staff Writer

HOUSTON — With five minutes left in the class, teacher Dan Beier concludes his rapid-fire lecture on the origin of World War I. Rather than let the juniors in his American history class drift into conversation, he calls a student up to the world map, drawn over the blackboard.

"Miss Harland, where is the Balkan Peninsula?" demands Beier, assuming the role of a preacher drilling the faithful in the catechism.

"Aw, she doesn't know where it's at,"

Students like teachers with high expectations

taunts someone in the back of Room 120 at Elbert L. Furr High School.

"Never end a sentence with a preposition," Beier chides.

During the grammar discussion, Miss Harland has successfully put her finger in the vicinity of Bulgaria. Other students are ordered to the map and locate the Scandinavian and Iberian peninsulas and the straits of Dover, Gibraltar, Bosporus and the Dardanelles before the bell rings at this integrated school on Houston's industrialized east side.

Along with map skills, Beier drills his students in vocabulary, spelling and a whole lot of American history for 55 minutes, non-stop daily.

"What do you remember about Woodrow Wilson?" he asks. "He was idealistic," several students say.

"Let's use our big word," says Beier, with exaggerated excitement. "He was a utopian," the class chimes in, using one of the hundreds of vocabulary words that line two blackboards in the room.

Later in the day, when one of Beier's students correctly uses the word "reprobate" in his English class, the teacher comments, "You must have learned that in Mr. Beier's class."

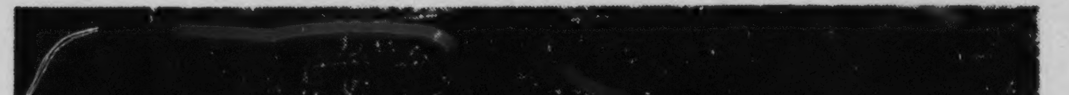
Beier's been known to cut out the lights for his lecture on the Dark Ages and to sing songs about President U. S. Grant. His students call him "crazy" and "corny," but in the next breath they pronounce him, "one good teacher."

Intuitively, Beier does two things in his classroom that researchers have found make for effective teaching. He holds high expectations for his kids — he expects them to remember how to spell Versailles, what the 17th Amendment did and what chicanery means. And he makes good use of time, teaching the whole period and keeping the bulk of the class attentive with his antics.

"I'm not sure teachers are aware of how they spend their time," says Nancy L. Karweit, a researcher at Johns Hopkins University. In one of her studies, she found that depending on the teacher, students in one small school district spent from 57 per cent to 88 per cent of the scheduled time for math actually learning math. Those who worked longer learned more.

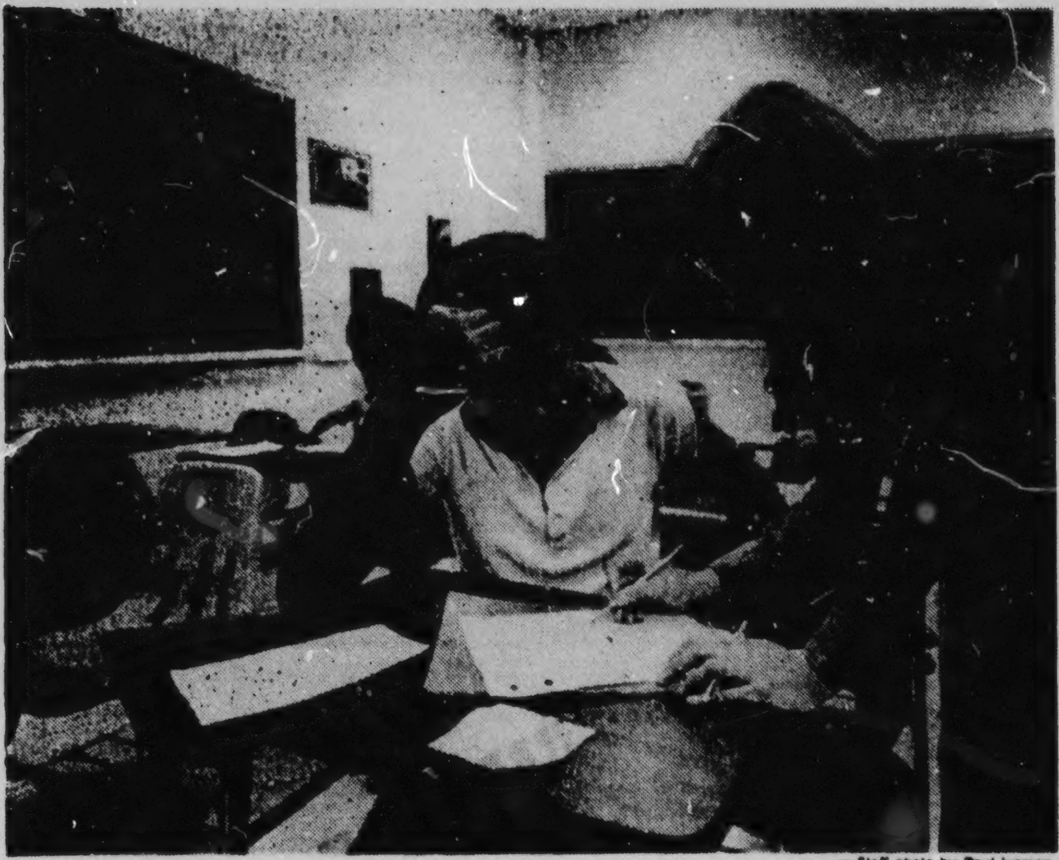
Ineffective teachers squandered time by starting late and finishing early, by boring students to distraction, by leaving students unoccupied while passing out papers or checking roll and by stopping class to take care of discipline problems.

"The research favors whole-group instruction



—Staff photo by Paul Iverson

History teacher Da[redacted]er of Furr High in Houston with his vocabulary list



—Staff photo by Paul Iverson

Math teacher Linda Berg helps a student at LBJ High in Austin

because recitation and lecture cause high time on task," Dr. Karweit says. "Time on task" is educational shorthand for when a student is paying attention — and learning.

But the trend in public education during the past 15 years has been toward individualizing instruction — teaching single students or small groups instead of instructing the whole class or group.

Effective urban schools are populated by teachers who start the lesson promptly, conduct class in a business-like manner, give and grade homework regularly, set clear goals for their students and expect them to meet them, according to Michael Rutter, who studied 2,700 students' careers in 12 inner-city London schools.

Ronald Edmonds, a Harvard University researcher who studied 55 effective elementary schools in the Northeast, writes, "Some schools are effective because they have a self-generating teacher corps that has a critical mass of dedicated people who are committed to being effective for all children they teach."

At Lyndon Baines Johnson High School in Austin, an astute principal, acting as personnel manager, stocked the new school with effective teachers, with predictable results. With a 57 per cent minority — mostly black — enrollment, LBJ's seniors score at or near the national average on standardized achievement tests.

Before LBJ opened in 1974, Principal Ronald D. Beauford had a year to choose his faculty. "He handpicked it pretty much," government teacher Jerry Vaclav says. "For the most part, those teachers are still the backbone of the school. There's not been a lot of turnover."

Beauford says he looks for teachers with "academic competencies" because they have "a certain kind of discipline."

"I've worked on faculties where it was a job, where people got into teaching because they got a vacation in the summer," English teacher Lynn Morris says. "Most teachers here have very strong academic backgrounds and very strong opinions."

The decor in the faculty offices support her contention. Along with the Phi Beta Kappa certificates are Woody Allen posters and a huge thumbprint with the caption, "I gotta be me."

In the classroom, one of LBJ's original teachers, Linda Berg, provides a textbook example of how to teach algebra effectively. As soon as the bell rings, the overhead projector clicks on with the answers to last night's homework already written on it.

"You had an assignment last night. I could say 'Take it out,' but I already know you have it out because you're on top of things," she says.

"Look at all those numbers," she says in mock disdain. "It's enough to make a person go crazy."

While the students check their papers, she checks the roll and then answers questions on the homework. After the day's lesson on factoring, the class works a problem at a time together, giving her a chance to clear up any questions before they practice several problems on their own.

At the end of the period, there's a short pop quiz to find out who's still having trouble with factoring and the inevitable homework assignment.

Down the hall, another teacher conducts her class in much the same way. She moves crisply from topic to topic, wasting little time as she follows the agenda written on the board. But the class sits listlessly. She tries to involve the students in a discussion but ends up answering her own questions. As one student explains, "To me, she just wants to get it over with."

A business-like approach works, but not an impersonal one.

That's the reason Bowie High School in El Paso works as well as it does, says its student body president, Isabel Flores.

"Some teachers care, Mrs. (Terry) Dodge especially," she says of her computer science teacher. "She really takes an interest in you as an individual."

"She gets on you to do the work," says another senior, Carlos Tonche. "She's constantly after us seniors to make applications to college and for scholarships."

One teacher does not a school make, but Bowie's unique situation seems to have attracted a number of caring teachers, such as Mrs. Dodge, who have high expectations of their students and an almost missionary zeal about learning.

For 50 years, Bowie has been the first stop for many on their way out of the tenements and public housing of south El Paso. Its students are first- and second-generation immigrants, who retain some of the respect for teachers and schooling that remains a part of the Mexican culture.

"I get pretty close to my kids," says Carolyn Legorreta, a science teacher at Bowie. "If you get close and warm, they do respond."

She also gets involved, increasing enrollment in chemistry from 30 to 120 students in just one year, her department chairman says.

"I ran into a student I had first semester who had messed up the first six weeks. But he settled down and made a 'D' in the course. He was told to register for basic biology. I told him to register for regular biology. I asked him, 'Don't you realize that lower-level course is an insult to your intelligence?' " Ms. Legorreta says.

"Kids live up to a teacher's expectations. I'd like to see it change a bit so we don't get so many lower-level courses the kids don't need."

"Some of the teachers here are too easy. I would change that," says Miss Flores, who has her choice of MIT, Stanford or Columbia universities next fall. "I wish it had been harder."

As she speaks, a gust of wind sweeps through the courtyard at Bowie, tossing her wildly curly black hair. Within sight of her school, on the nearby bridge to Juarez, the Mexican and American flags flap in the breeze.

At the more affluent schools in north El Paso, "Parents push the kids to take harder courses and the teachers to give harder work," says Miss Flores, whose father is a machinist.

Another Bowie student, junior Patsy Horbach, counts Carol Pancoast as one of her best teachers for having pushed her to do outside reading, book reports and a research paper with footnotes,

"Mrs. Pancoast is a good teacher. She constantly gives us homework. She makes us study and work," says Miss Horbach, who wants to be a legal secretary.

Mrs. Pancoast says simply, "I feel like if I expect them to do it, they will."

Fourth in a Series

May 27, 1981

Milwaukee proves the poor can learn

By LINDA AUSTIN
Staff Writer

MILWAUKEE — Senior Mary Rogers says she can see some difference in North Division High School this year. "They've cracked down on discipline," she says, gesturing with a copy of "Jane Eyre" in her hand.

Sophomore Terry Hollins agrees. In class, "The teachers don't like to see us waste our time." On top of that, "I've got to take homework home every day — 2 hours' worth," he says with a groan.

North Division, Milwaukee's blackest and bleakest high school, is on the comeback trail. Although it's starting out as bad off as any of Dallas' worst high schools, Milwaukee educators believe they can turn around North Division and 20 other of the city's worst elementary and middle schools, also mostly black.

"It's a well-documented fact that public education has not met the needs of urban children, particularly children of the poor and children of color," says Maureen Larkin, a supervisor involved in the Milwaukee school improvement project.

"But the debate has now ended," she says. "The effective schools research shows that students with low income need not end up with low achievement."

In the past decade, researchers have begun to identify schools that work for poor and minority students. The key to their success has been mostly common sense and hard work: Holding high expectations for students, having a strong principal, giving healthy helpings of homework, spending more time on the 3 R's, maintaining order, making more efficient use of class time and upholding clear-cut standards.

In Milwaukee, and a handful of

Hard work replaces the happiness quest in Milwaukee

other urban school districts, educators are making a concentrated effort to apply that research. But, like putting Mercurochrome on a wound, applying the research to those schools in need of a remedy hasn't been painless.

The biggest problem hasn't been limited funding or parental disinterest or the kids' bad home life. It's been convincing teachers and principals that what they've been doing isn't working and that poor, black children can learn.

"The problem in educating low-income and minority students is first an attitudinal problem; second an educational problem; and third a political problem. If you can solve the first two, then those people will bring pressure to bear on the third," Ms. Larkin says.

Ronald Edmonds agrees. "You don't have to persuade parents these children are educable; you have to persuade teachers," says the Harvard University researcher who studied 55 effective schools in the Northeast.

The view that schools and teachers can't make a difference first gained respectability in 1966, when sociologist James Coleman reported that the strongest determiner of a child's achievement was his family background and social class.

"I remember seeing a newspaper article on Coleman's study stuck on the bulletin board in the teachers' lounge," Ms. Larkin says. "It was one of the most debilitating pieces of information. It said, 'You don't make a difference.' "

Because students wore ragged clothes or had no fathers, teachers expected little of them, and students lived up to those expectations. "It was a self-perpetuating cycle," Ms. Larkin says.

"I don't think it's their fault," says Dallas school board President Kathlyn Gilliam about educators' limited expectations for minority students. "I think the system perpetuated that idea. Even now, whenever we talk about remedial programs, Title I, it's always with the idea of bringing them up, making them as good. I still contend they're all right when we get them."

"Some people call it head-patting, pampering," Milwaukee Supt. Lee R. McMurrin says. "We said, 'We won't add another burden to your life. You didn't have any breakfast. At least school will be a nice place to come.' Yet the greatest harm we could do was not teach them."

Al Weiss, principal of Milwaukee's Twentieth Street School, which is targeted for improvement, says, "We got involved in making the kids happy. We didn't make them compete; we didn't put pressure on them. It doesn't mean we were bad people; we were just a part of society."

McMurrin says, "Teachers tell me their principals are new persons. They've been 'born again' they're so different in their management style and approach to things. They are managers as opposed to keeping kids happy.

"They're making schools out of these institutions."

Among the changes in the targeted schools has been the return of homework. "In the past if they didn't bring it back, nothing happened," Ms. Larkin says. "In one school, they denied lunch hour to those who didn't. They got 10 minutes to eat and spent the rest of the time in the classroom, doing homework. In one week, they were bringing it in."

The Milwaukee schools recommend an hour of homework a night in grades 1-3 and two to three hours a night in grades 4-8. According to a Dallas school district pamphlet on homework, students in grades 1-2 should have a maximum of 15 minutes of homework a night, increasing to 30 minutes in grades 3-4 and one hour in grades 5-6.

The Dallas schools continue to pull students out of their regular classes for remedial instruction under the federally financed Title I program, a practice no longer tolerated in the Milwaukee schools. Instead, the Title I teacher helps out the classroom teacher in the classroom, minimizing the time lost sending students elsewhere and avoiding labeling those students as "dummies."

Making Schools Work

"Separate and pull-out instructional strategies rarely accrue to the benefit of the kids targeted," researcher Edmonds says. "Yet it's far less taxing administratively if you just separate the kids."

With higher expectations and more emphasis on academics, Milwaukee's 20 lowest scoring schools expect to raise their achievement level to the national average in reading, math and language in three years — by 1982. The first test scores showing how well they're doing will be available next month.

Principal Weiss is confident. "Family background is important, but not overwhelming," he says. "Our people are going to work harder with better teaching techniques and more time on the basics. Our substituting is going to overcome the advantages that folks in the suburbs have. In time, we'll match up with suburban schools because they're not working as hard and not planning as well."

In the heart of Milwaukee's inner city, providing conclusive evidence that it can be done, is St. Leo's Catholic school. Ninety-eight per cent of St. Leo's primary schoolers are on or above grade level — an almost unheard-of feat for a school where 98 per cent of the enrollment is black and 95 per cent are poor enough to receive free lunches. In the Dallas school district, which has a 70 per cent minority enrollment, only 58 per cent of the third graders are reading on or above grade level.

Although some might attribute St. Leo's performance to selective admissions, Principal George Raymond says he accepts students on a first-come, first-served basis, has expelled only one student and keeps "a very high percentage" on the roll who do not pay the $372 a year it costs. With 408 students enrolled, it has a waiting list of 500.

"We can learn a lot from St. Leo's," Ms. Larkin says. "I keep waiting for somebody to tell me why this can't work in the public schools and nobody can."

"Many schools make excuses for

ENOUGH IS ENO
USES

— Milwaukee Journal photo

Students at Milwaukee's North Division High School walked out of class in 1980 in a successful fight against a plan to turn it from a neighborhood facility into a citywide magnet school.

children. I don't allow for excuses. I don't think I can," says Raymond, whose 14 teachers make a flat $7,900 a year and whose classes average 30 students. "I tell teachers that all students will produce and achieve above grade level."

To catch up students who are behind, "We've had to accelerate the curriculum. If you're going to cover four times the material, you have to pick and chose your objectives," says the lean and lanky Raymond. "You have to have a clear indication of where you're going and how long it's going to take to get there."

Raymond is jealous of time for instruction. "The teacher instructs the entire group. I don't believe in teaching to a group here and a group here. If you teach to two or three groups, they get one-third the time they deserve," says Raymond, who also teaches algebra at St. Leo's.

"We have to stress basics," says Raymond, a product of the New Hampshire public schools. "We don't teach art or music for music's sake. We teach it when and if it fits into the reading program. Kids making chains at Christmas — that to me is a waste of time. They get nothing out of that except less teaching time."

Repetition and retention are routine at St. Leo's. The sound of children spelling words in unison echoes in the wooden-floored hallways. "Children are aware that we do retain," says Raymond, who will hold back four primary schoolers this year. "If children are not retained, they realize that they can get by doing minimum work."

Beginning this school year, the Dallas schools began holding back students in grades 1-3 who fail to achieve certain minimal skills. As in Milwaukee, the most foot-dragging on retention has not come from parents, but some educators, whose "vanity is getting in the way," according to Supt. Linus Wright.

In Milwaukee, the principals in schools targeted for improvement are battling the school bureaucracy for the right to retain students before the end of the third grade.

"The people at the central office are scared to death," Ms. Larkin says. "They (the schools' principals and teachers) know more about effective schools than they do. Principals and teachers are taking over their schools. We at the central office are used to telling them what to do. When we set to be instructional leaders, nobody thought they'd do it."

Complicating matters further at North Division High School, the school improvement project is entangled in community and school board politics. Two years ago, the school board voted to turn North Division's new $20 million campus into a magnet school, open only to students interested in high-technology careers.

But the students staged a one-day walkout and the inner-city community organized, taking as its slogan "enough is enough." Much like Dallas' Black Coalition to Maximize Education, Milwaukee's Coalition to Save North Division said to stop busing black children and start educating them.

The Coalition to Save North Division sued and won an out-of-court settlement, keeping North Division open as a neighborhood school until 1984 and starting the school improvement project this school year.

"I think we've turned the general climate around at North," says coalition spokesman Howard Fuller, citing the almost 4 point increase in the attendance rate to 84 per cent and the more than doubling in library circulation. "I would be supremely confident about it's working if I thought we had the total commitment of the school system to do something about it."

"There are 1,200 blacks in that school. We would have had 1,200 whites there, too," Supt. McMurrin says, with North as a magnet school. "We intend to make sure that the 1,200 left have the finest school in the city. We're going to work very hard with the community."

"We keep zeroing in on high expectations," says Marion Gratz, North's learning coordinator. "I hear teachers use that phrase; they're conscious of it."

All North ninth- and tenth-graders are taking English, math, reading and science, plus another period of one of those subjects, whichever they show weaknesses. The school's first student behavior code is in effect, and suspensions dropped almost 75 per cent last fall.

"We're fighting still with some teachers there, who don't believe in what we're talking about doing," says Fuller, a 1958 graduate of North.

Fuller became aware of the sad state of North's current graduates as associate director of Marquette University's admissions program for poor and minority students.

"Only the better (North) students were trying to get into Marquette, and those students were underprepared in many areas, particularly in math and English skills," he says. "They weren't radically different from black students coming from all over the city. The problem is not simply a problem at North Division."

"Our contention is that black kids are not educated in the Milwaukee school system," says Dotty Holman, the coalition's attorney. "Parents think by sending their kid to a desegregated school that's going to be the answer. We're saying they're getting undereducated. The kids are getting a raw deal.

"Education should be effective for all kids."

Dallas Times Herald

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2-L · Sunday, May 31, 1981

Toward better schools

The search for ways to improve the public schools is now focusing on resurrecting some fundamentals — good principals and teachers, structured teaching, homework, basic curricula and classroom discipline.

Happily, that trend is catching on in many parts of the country, and Dallas and some of its suburbs recently have begun to move in the same direction.

Times Herald education writer Linda Austin, with the assistance of a grant from George Washington University's Institute for Education Leadership, identified public schools in places as diverse as Milwaukee and El Paso that are in the vanguard of today's educational progress.

The message that comes from her four-part series in the Times Herald last week is that public schools *can* provide good educational opportunities for coming generations of Americans if the necessary commitment from the teachers, school administrators and parents is made.

The doomsayers, those who delight in predicting the end of public education as a viable institution in America, do not have to be right. In fact, we believe that it is extremely important that they be wrong. Good public education is as vital to a modern state as commerce, transportation, commmunications and national defense. A nation can have a pluralistic educational system, a healthy mix of public and private — as the United States has had since the public schools were inspired by Horace Mann in the early 1800s — but it is doubtful that private resources could successfully replace the public school system.

Another message from Ms. Austin's series is that public schools that have enrollments of mostly poor and minority students do not have to be "bad" or ineffective schools. Sociologist James Coleman's tired argument that the home environment controls the learning potential of the child and that nothing much can be done in the classroom is flawed.

"The problem in educating low-income and minority students is first an attitudinal problem, second an educational problem and third a political problem," observes Maureen Larkin, curriculum specialist for the Milwaukee school improvement program. "If you can solve the first two, then those people will bring pressure to bear on the third."

Harvard University researcher Ronald Edmonds says, "You don't have to persuade parents these children are educable; you have to persuade teachers."

Ms. Austin identified several "effective schools" in poor neighborhoods where there has been considerable educational progress, schools such as Milwaukee's North Division, Austin's LBJ High School and Houston's Ebbert L. Furr High School. What faculties and many students at these schools have in common is enthusiasm, industriousness and unrelenting determination to achieve educational progress.

"You have to have high expectations, high standards of conduct," summarized Claude H. Brinkley Jr., principal at Houston's progressive Milby High School.

Motivation is one of the major factors at effective schools, but so are efforts to reduce bureaucracy, to recruit the best teachers and administrators, to eliminate idle time in the classrooms, to maintain discipline and to concentrate on traditional academics.

One difference between Milwaukee's approach and that found in some Dallas-area public schools is that Title 1 students in Milwaukee are no longer pulled out of regular classes for remedial classes. They receive instruction in their regular classes. And "individualized instruction," which used to be one of those pop education slogans heard so often around the country, means home work — not time wasted by teachers filing out progress reports while students are "taught" by a machine of some sort. Another difference is the homework requirement. The Dallas Independent School District policy handbook prescribes 15 minutes of homework a night for students in grades 1-2, 30 minutes for students in grades 3-4 and one hour in grades 5-6. In Milwaukee's public schools, one hour of homework is recommended for grades 1-3 and two to three hours for grades 4-8.

Dallas' public school system, which has been disrupted at the classroom level since 1971 by several desegregation plans and has been considerably mismanaged at the administrative level, appears to be seeking a new direction with policy changes that end social promotion, tighten up on absenteeism and strengthen curriculum requirements. Further efforts to reduce administrative paperwork and to put emphasis on support for good teachers in the classroom are needed.

Settlement of the desegregation case in the federal courts this year and the election in November of a new school board that is determined to provide leadership will be milestones along the road of educational progress in Dallas.

And progress, of course, can, and must, be made.

THE LEDGER-STAR

Norfolk, Portsmouth, Virginia Beach, Chesapeake, Suffolk, Virginia September 8, 1981

First in a Series

Pressure pays off

Strong leader a key to school success

JOHN McMANUS

John McManus has been the education writer for *The Ledger Star* in Norfolk since 1979. Among his awards during this period was a recent first place in the annual Virginia Press competition.

A prominent feature of McManus's writing has been his concentration on education programs and services for low-income, minority students. For his Fellowship study, McManus chose to seek out public elementary schools in Virginia and neighboring states that have prepared urban minorities from low income areas to compete academically with middle class youth. McManus sought out elementary schools that enrolled at least 40 percent minority students, served at least 25 percent of its children free federal lunches—a poverty indicator—and scored above national norms in standardized tests. No schools with selective admissions policies were considered. He visited schools in Philadelphia, Richmond, Portsmouth and New Haven which were indentified as among the best in serving youngsters from low income neighborhoods.

McManus found that essentially the same factors distinguished these effective inner city schools from schools which continued the pattern of failure: a strong principal with an ironclad belief that all children can learn; teachers who can make the learning experience interesting; an environment free of distractions and dedicated to learning; a continuous curriculum; an effective testing and evaluation program; and a consistent effort to involve parents in their children's education.

This is the first of a seven-part series on inner-city schools by The Ledger-Star's education writer, John McManus, who for 11 weeks last spring studied elementary schools along the Atlantic Coast in search of those successful in educating minority pupils and youngsters from deteriorating neighborhoods.

By JOHN McMANUS
Ledger-Star Staff Writer

What enables a handful of schools among the thousands enrolling large numbers of inner-city children to break the national pattern of failure?

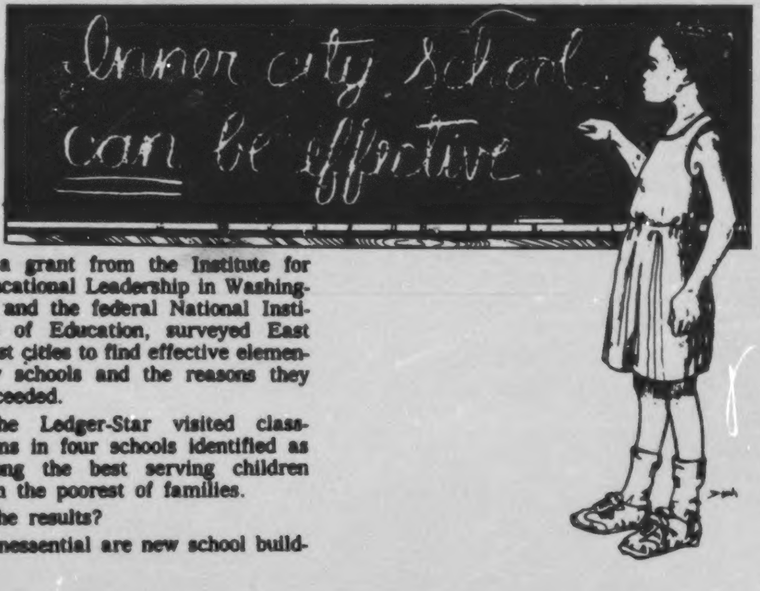
It is an increasingly important question because each year there's an increase in the proportion of America's public school seats filled by poor black and Hispanic children. Last spring, The Ledger-Star, aided by a grant from the Institute for Educational Leadership in Washington and the federal National Institute of Education, surveyed East Coast cities to find effective elementary schools and the reasons they succeeded.

The Ledger-Star visited classrooms in four schools identified as among the best serving children from the poorest of families.

The results?

Unessential are new school buildings, television monitors, projectors, tape recorders, veteran teachers, class sizes in the lower twenties, new textbooks and highly paid teachers, although those elements might help.

In fact, the urban elementary school in the survey whose students performed best was located in a deteriorating building. It had little audio-visual equipment, almost no money for supplies, class sizes approaching 30 students and outdated



schoolbooks in several basic subjects.

But Samuel Gompers School in Philadelphia, as well as schools in Richmond, New Haven, Conn., and Portsmouth, have all or most of the following factors which appear to distinguish them from failing urban schools:

★ A strong leader for a principal, with an ironclad belief that all children can learn. The successful principal demands performance from students, teachers and parents.

James Clements, principal of Samuel Gompers School, for example, can't reward teachers with raises. Nor can he fire them if they don't work hard.

But he can, and does, send letters home to parents of children falling behind, suggesting meetings with teachers. Instructors who want their evenings free learn to keep their students above grade level.

★ Teachers, often inexperienced, who make learning more interesting than goofing off, and insist that time must not be wasted. Beyond two to three years, experience did not appear to make much difference in teachers' effectiveness.

★ An atmosphere free of distractions and permeated by a clear purpose — learning.

Angela Hamler, a fourth-grader who transferred into Overby-Sheppard School in Richmond, says it better: "The children don't put a lot of trash around the school yard. And they don't disturb you during tests."

"This school is better than my old school," adds a third-grade transfer. "There, they got everybody beatin' up on each other."

A continuous curriculum emphasizing reading, writing and arithmetic, which lets a student begin the new year, if he's ready, at the same page he left the previous June.

★ A testing and evaluation process which allows teachers to properly place each student and then measure progress. Proper placement includes a willingness to retain students, particularly in grades one to three.

★ A continuing effort to involve parents in their children's education. Principal Herbert L. Crockett of Overby-Sheppard School, for instance, travels his neighborhood like a postman. And he raffles off television sets to get parents into the school.

In New Haven, Principal Steve Signore says he takes parents' calls before those from school officials. He hires parents as aides and gives them a powerful say in running the school. And the community accepts more responsibility for making Martin Luther King School a success.

Staff photo by [illegible]

James Clements, principal of Samuel Gompers School in Philadelphia, with some of his students

Any simplification of hundreds of observations of students, teachers, parents and principals into a short recipe for success is dangerous in a complex subject. But The Ledger-Star findings are similar to conclusions reached in other research on effective schools.

Nowhere in that research is there a count of effective schools in America's core cities. But what surveys have been done suggest, in the words of Harvard University researcher Dr. Ronald R. Edmonds, "the proportion is minuscule."

The Ledger-Star's survey illustrates the case. The search began with letters or calls to the superintendents of 23 urban school districts.

The inquiry sought elementary schools that enrolled at least 40 percent minority students, served at least 25 percent of its children free federal lunches — a poverty indicator — and scored above national norms on standardized tests. No schools with selective admission policies were considered.

Four superintendents failed to reply and five said their systems contained no such schools. The other 14 nominated candidates, but fewer than 20 schools overall.

Several nominations were dropped after a close look showed inconsistent test patterns, or reading levels recorded by classroom teachers so low they raised suspicions above the honesty of high test scores.

Of more than 50 schools which met the enrollment requirements in Tidewater, only Churchland Elementary in Portsmouth was able to document that its students tested above national norms and that half or more were reading at or beyond grade level.

Even at Churchland, an analysis separating the children who live in that moderately affluent neighborhood from those bused across the Western Branch of the Elizabeth River from a downtown housing project shows a substantial gap in academic performance. The poorest children at Churchland, however, are not far below the national average in reading and appear to be closing in on the national norm in mathematics.

Edmonds, former director of the Center for Urban Studies at Harvard University and a consultant to New York City's school system, says he and his colleagues searched the northeastern quadrant of the nation, drawing a line from Detroit to Baltimore and looking north. Edmonds reports finding only 55 elementary and middle schools effective for poor and black children among a sample of nearly 1,800 schools.

Those 55, however, he says, are "a big enough number to prove the point" that schools can succeed with even the most difficult students.

"Every school," he contends, "ought to be expected to meet the present national (test) average regardless of the socio-economic status of its students."

Second in a Series

September 9, 1981

Principal insists teachers teach, students study

By JOHN McMANUS
Ledger-Star Staff Writer

PHILADELPHIA — Police have arrived. Firemen are coming.

Light from a gray afternoon penetrates the chain-link fence padlocked to the windows of the principal's office and falls on Dawn, a second-grader whose cheeks are streaked with tears. Her walnut-colored hands stick out from silver handcuffs.

Five feet away, Gregory sobs, his small torso heaving, his dark eyes glistening.

"Get out of the way," shout yellow-coated firemen, carrying hacksaws and shoving through the sea of wide-eyed youngsters gathered outside the office.

There has been an unauthorized handcuffing. Dawn's the victim. The handcuffs belong to Gregory. "An acc-acc-accident," he hiccups.

While Dawn is being freed, Principal Jim Clements' hand covers most of Gregory's small shoulder. He had growled at the boy, but that was earlier.

"We probably won't be able to give them back to you whole," he consoles. "They'll probably have to saw them."

Clements pats Gregory on the head and sends him back to class.

The principal turns to Dawn, giving her a Polaroid snapshot he took a few moments earlier. It shows a pretty Hispanic girl holding up handcuffed arms. "Something for your memory book," he says.

Trauma has been transferred into a happy memory.

How often are students handcuffed at Gompers School?

"About twice a week," jokes Clements.

Handcuffs, police, the rage children take from troubled homes and transfer to teachers are part of schooling in every American core city, including Samuel Gompers Elementary School on Philadelphia's west side.

But there's something else here, something unusual in urban education—excellence.

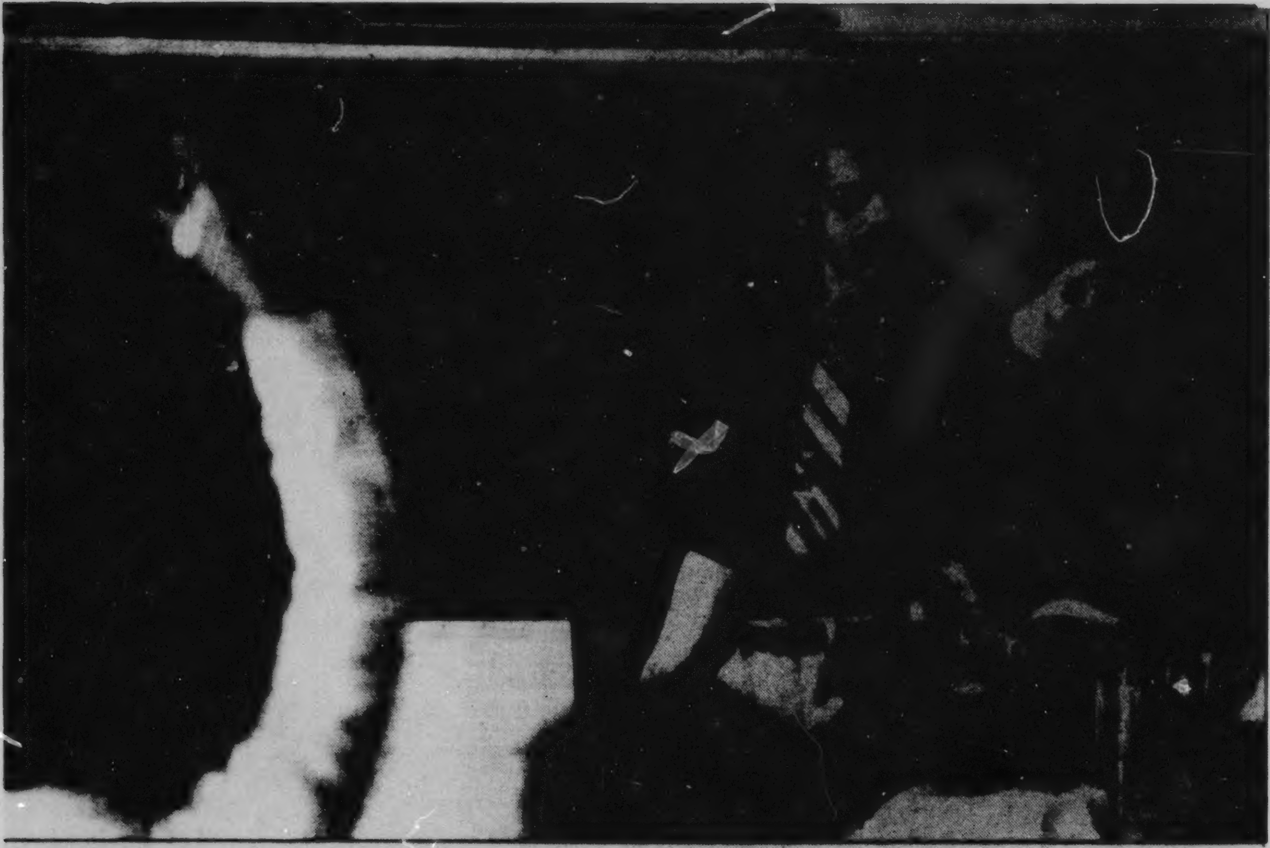
Samuel Gompers,. with an enrollment 98 percent black and Hispanic, sticks out as the inner city school with the highest test scores in Philadelphia. Why?

"Jim Clements," say administrators in the Philadelphia school system.

Then they mention the list of children from all over this city of 1.8 million who are waiting for a desk to open at Gompers.

"Jim Clements' school is not typical," says Dr. Jeanette Brewer. She's the district superintendent for Gompers and 36 other schools on the west side of of a contentious group of ethnic neighborhoods in search of a city. "Jim Clements has really established himself more than many principals as the educational leader," she says.

Gompers' academic credentials are first-rate: a consistent record of rising scores on national tests since Clements took over in 1970 so that now only 18 percent of 626 students score below the 50th percentile, or national average. Three students in 10 here place among the top 15 percent of all



Gerry Carpenter teaches 6th graders at Gompers in Philadelphia

Staff photo by Bill Ballenberg

American school children. And 7 in 10 read at or beyond grade level as measured by teachers records of students' progress in a series of textbooks.

That achievement is more typical of suburban schools.

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Philadelphia is at odds with its schools. In March, when Samuel Gompers was visited, the mayor was trying to fire the superintendent and the School Board. The City Council had threatened to take over the 244,000-student system, the nation's fourth largest. And the superintendent was trying to borrow $30 million from skeptical city banks to meet the next payroll. (The banks refused, but the state rescued the city at the last minute, keeping the schools open. But today, 30 striking teachers were arrested while picketing outside the school administration building. The striking teachers have threatened to delay the opening of school Thursday.)

"The schools have cataclysmic financial problems," says J. William Jones, the system's public information director. The 1980-81 school year began with a three-week teachers strike. In January, the janitors struck for three days and the buildings were too cold to open.

Teachers in Philadelphia, even those with tenure, are routinely laid off, then rehired the following fall when that year's financial crisis has been resolved.

"It's a game," says Gompers first grade teacher Mike Levin. A master's degree hasn't protected him from three layoffs in seven years. Levin has found one compensation. He collects unemployment benefits during the summers. Without the layoffs, he would be ineligible. "That's $162 a week," he says. "If they took that money they could really help the schools."

Philadelphia is also awaiting a Supreme Court decision that might plunge the city into busing to desegregate the few city schools where whites still attend in any numbers.

"It would be very difficult for me to say there is public satisfaction with the public schools," admits Brewer.

Jim Clements is more blunt. He calls Philadelphia's school situation "the prime example of bureaucratic nonsense. It's like teaching out of a brown paper bag," he fumes. "Right now, we're all waiting to be laid off at the end of March."

★ ★ ★

Samuel Gompers School sits in an unlikely neighborhood for an enrollment where half the students are poor enough to qualify for free federal lunches. The building resembles an inner city school. Its windows are armored like a downtown pawnshop after hours. The trees on this corner lot are surrounded by square fences with ⅝th-inch steel bars.

But the immediate neighborhood, 99 percent Jewish 12 years ago, has massive limestone homes of seven to 12 bedrooms each. Many have swimming pools. Some have carriage houses, now converted to two- and three-unit apartments.

Were these mansions located a mile away across the city line, they'd fetch $150,000 to $200,000, says a neighborhood Realtor.

Crime, plunging property values and an influx of black families changed the neighborhood's complexion in just a few years around 1970.

Inside the yellow brick of Gompers, bare lightbulbs hang from hallway ceilings. It's cold enough in March so that most students wear sweaters. Roof leaks have dissolved the plaster in places. Many library books wear the frayed hoar of old age.

But because this school works, it has a reputation among teachers as well as students. Faculty members call it "the country club" and the "castle on the hill." If I were transferred," says one Gompers teacher, "I'd throw a fit."

Staff photo by Bill Ballenberg

Sharing

Two classmates share a snack at Gompers

And now, Clements' program at Gompers is being studied to see if it can be reproduced at other city schools.

The heart of that program, according to District Superintendent Brewer, is the extraordinary control Clements exercises. "Most principals don't use Clements' minute record-keeping. He is so knowledgeable about every child, he makes sure the child is properly placed," she explains. "And teachers find it very difficult to say why a child of normal intelligence isn't learning."

"We set our goal at getting our students to achieve at their age and grade level," says Clements. That process begins with testing every child who enters Gompers to determine precisely the correct level of instruction. The testing continues every time a child finishes a chapter or level in at least three subjects — mathematics, reading and language arts, an umbrella term for writing, grammar and spelling. In those three basic areas, all Gompers teachers use the same texts and tests from kindergarten through grade six.

Every six weeks, Clements monitors progress. If learning does not keep pace with the time spent, "we find the reasons why or select alternatives at the point of breakdown. I have a file of the actual tests of every child in the building."

In basic skills, all teachers are required to use the Mastery Learning approach. Championed by Dr. Benjamin S. Bloom of the University of Chicago, mastery learning holds that children differ more in the pace of their learning than in native ability to learn.

Ninety-five percent of all children, Bloom argues, can master — not just learn — what is taught in school. But some students may take five times as long to "get" a lesson.

So Bloom and Clements contend students should be grouped according to what they have previously mastered, then taught new material and tested again. Those who fail to correctly answer 80 percent — a mastery level — of the test questions must be retaught what they missed and retested, until they succeed.

The idea is to build on success, and not proceed until tests show there is mastery. The approach reportedly is particularly successful in ghetto schools because it takes nothing for granted in a student's prior learning.

It also seems to build self-confidence.

"So many of the children in our district do not have high expectations," says Brewer. "And one failure after another does not build the self-esteem necessary to succeed. Mastery Learning has built-in successes. That becomes a motivating factor for both students and teachers."

Despite the enthusiasm beginning to build nationally around mastery learning — Chicago schools, for instance, have reordered their curriculum around it — Clements has found drawbacks. "Bloom says 95 percent can master. I think he's out of his mind. We feel lucky to have 80 percent master with the wide range of students we have."

"Mastery learning says you just don't give up," says sixth grade teacher Gerry Carpenter, slapping a baseball into his glove in the school gym. "But I only give it twice. If they don't get 80, that's it, 'you failed it.' Ideally, these students should be set aside and taught again. But we don't have time for that. You can't lose the whole class for a couple."

Overall, feelings are positive about mastery learning. "Since we started mastery this year, the success rates have been better," Clements says. Although Mastery Learning is new at Gompers, pressure on students to learn is not. Clements estimates that 30 percent of his students have repeated a year.

That's high, more than three times Norfolk's elementary retention rate. But it's necessary, according to Clements to convince students that teachers are serious about the pace of their learning.

Clements puts more pressure on his teachers than most principals. "I really keep a hands off approach so long as they get the job done," he says. "I don't look at teachers' plans. I just look at what they've done."

When he finds progress lagging as little as four or five months, Clements writes notes to the parents suggesting meetings with the teacher. "Some (teachers) get upset because the parents are going to come in and hound them," he says with a smile. "It's an incentive to work harder.

"What you fight is an attitude among teachers that some children were born to be street cleaners or tap-dancers. I'm very adamant about that. You over-expect rather than under-expect.

"When you see teachers who don't expect enough sometimes you have to give them a push," he says.

The letter to this teacher is formal. The paragraphs are numbered. The signature is Jim Clements.' It reads:

"1. Once again you have no record of language progress for your class. I didn't ask for a log, but I want to see test results. . .If I don't see some results on my next review, I'll consider your neglect unsatisfactory.

"2. Good movement in reading!

"3. Your math success rate is the poorest in the school — only 67 percent of your class passing — why? What can you do about it?

"I'll gladly help if necessary."

* * *

In addition to students and teachers, Clements leans on parents.

"I've never met a parent who wasn't extremely interested in his kids," he says. "But some get bogged down in survival."

Then it's time for a visit or call. His message: "You've got to establish that your child is the first priority, more important than your job, more important than cooking a meal, more important than resting and watching TV and more important than reading the paper. You are the most important teacher of your child, not some public employee."

"I see these parents as similar to my family," Clements explains. "My father was a tile setter who was kicked out of school in sixth grade.

Gompers-at-a-glance

Samuel Gompers School; Philadelphia;Grades K-4,628 students; 98 percent black or Hispanic, 2 percent white;free lunch: 82 percent-;proportion reading on grade level: 65 percent estimated;national test scores: all-grades average is 69th percentile;average teacher salary: $23,000;daily attendance: 92 percent;mobility: 112 students left and 226 entered since the 1981-82 school year began.

Mom left in 10th grade and went to business school. But education was central for children to get more than the parents had."

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Stroll down the halls of Gompers School and you will see few lines. Students walk in groups. When the cafeteria is full, don't enter. Conversation is impossible because of the noise.

Push open the door to the boys' bathroom. It's so cold that urine steams on its way to the toilet. The bowls are overflowing onto the floor. No soap. No paper towels. Not even toilet paper.

"My philosophy of discipline is very casual," explains Clements. "The lunch room? Kids need to blow off steam. I never go in there. I'm not in the catering business."

"You can get so bogged down in that kind of nonsense, you forget to teach." Success in the classroom, he argues, nearly eliminates serious discipline problems.

Discipline also comes easier, he says, when there's a variety of ability groups in each class. "Everyone needs a model. The low classes we used to have here were just the pits."

Clements asked teachers to remove the paper from the boys' room and put it in the classroom because students routinely soaked it, rolled it into a ball and hurled it to the ceiling.

"Instant stalactites," he says. "It's cold as hell in there, so you figure no one's going to hang around.

"In the girl's bathroom, one child defecated in the sink. Every day, there it was.

"And the boys pee on the radiators to make steam. But my father used to do that when he was in junior high school, so that's not a new trick."

"I guess I don't push discipline because of my own background. I had so many fights and was suspended."

Noon recess. Out on the playground the basketball is an extension of David Rush's hand. The sixth grader controls it like a yo-yo. "People are nice here," he says. "Teachers are nice. There's not a lot of fighting like in other schools, or people beaten up or writing on the walls. No violence, nobody throwing glass and rocks. There's only a fight maybe every two weeks."

"Y'all come on. The teacher is waiting," says Rush's classmate, Joe Person.

"What's the principal like?" a visitor asks.

"Mr. Clements? He gave me the money to fix my bike for a birthday present," says Person. "He's a good friend of mine."

Teachers, too, seem to like Clements, as much for his demands as for anything else.

"He's strong in that he demands very close record keeping so he knows exactly where the children are in math, reading and language," says Barbara Rouse, a kindergarten teacher of 25 years. "But he lets up in other areas. He doesn't demand lesson plans."

"He's a very curriculum-minded principal," says sixth grade teacher Carpenter. Clements "believes we're here to educate. He asks questions of ineffective teachers. 'Why isn't so and so learning?' "

"Things that are done in other schools are not done here," says Karen Garbeil, who runs a remedial class. "A teacher would never hit a child here because they know he wouldn't stand for it. A teacher would never leave her class, because he wouldn't allow it. He puts the emphasis on education, not on discipline and cleanliness."

"I think you're going to enjoy percents," Leona Whitfield is telling her sixth graders this morning.

"If I could take Calvin and could divide him magically into seven parts and place six into Nicole's pockets, would Calvin be whole?"

"No-o-o!" responds the class.

Nicole: "I don't have any pockets."

Ms. Whitfield: "What did you do with Calvin?"

Nicole: "You best look in the trash can."

The class laughs. All eyes are on Ms. Whitfield, a teacher for 15 years who will be taking a sabattical next year to pursue graduate studies. She takes the class quickly through a drill on fractions, then asks students to the blackboard to convert fractions to percents. No student fails.

Fifty minutes into the class Richard attempts a pencil sharpening. Mrs. Whitfield examines his point, then rebuffs him.

After an hour of math, a student is getting restless. "Someone is talking," she says. "And if you're talking, you're not working. If you're not working, you're not learning."

Silence.

"You have three things working well in this school," Mrs. Whitfield later explains. "A principal who is working with you, parents, and teachers. You need all three."

Crown is heavy on a principal's head

Officials target of slings and arrows

By JOHN McMANUS
Ledger-Star Staff Writer

PHILADELPHIA — Despite his nearly unparalleled success, there are times when nobody believes in Jim Clements. Not even himself.

Join a March meeting in the principal's office, requested by the leaders of the Gompers Home and School Association, the parents' organization. Seven angry black parents and a white principal sit at a long table empty but for a mug bearing the helmeted image of Darth Vader.

"The more we put into the Home and School, the more disgusted I get," Barbara Frisbee shouts. She's a volunteer teacher's aide at Gompers.

"The teachers, they are no help whatsoever," says a second parent. "The teachers couldn't care less about the candy sale!"

"Parents feel they cannot talk to you," Dorothy Brown, another volunteer at Gompers, tells Clements. "They say you protect the teachers." She is one of the few who looks at Clements when she speaks.

"We feel you should be developing a rapport with the children, to say, 'These are my children,' " says William Hutchings, a postal worker who heads the parents' organization.

The mood is turning ugly. Clements' choice of a white teacher as the school's candidate for teacher of the year is seen as racist. The only award the teacher deserves, Mrs. Brown observes, is for "bizarre behavior and sadistic attacks."

"What we say here, we don't want twisted," Mrs. Frisbee warns Clements.

One hour into the meeting, Mrs. Brown asks "a commitment from you as a principal that you're 100 percent behind us."

"I'm sorry that I have to be asked for my commitment," Clements finally responds. "I don't know how I can get you to believe that I've been waiting 10 years for a Home and School Association to be as concerned as you are about the school. I don't feel at all threatened.

"Heavy hangs the head that bears the crown," Clements continues. "But I've got broad shoulders."

★ ★ ★

Broad shoulders?

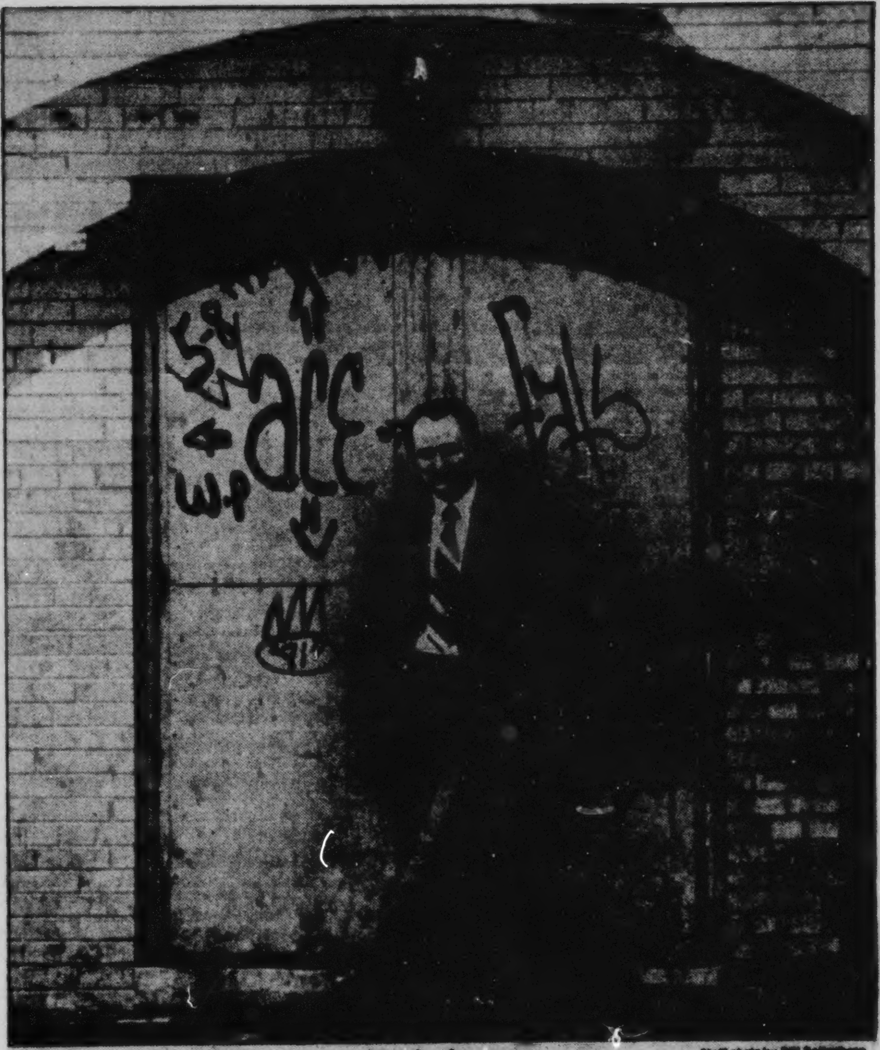
"It was the worst year I ever had in the business," Clements conceded in an interview last week. "I put in three requests for a transfer last year. You feel set up after a while. We're 'The Man;' we're 'The System.' You get fed up.

"Things did calm down," Clements said. "Maybe it was childish of me to ask to move, but I was going through burnout or depression."

The man Philadelphia school officials hope will teach them how to make other urban schools as effective as his, is not made of steel.

> **"You feel set up after a while. We're 'The Man;' we're 'The System.' You get fed up."**
>
> Jim Clements

Clements' superior, Dr. Jeanette Brewer, met with the disgruntled parents. Being black, her rapport may have been better. And she rejected each of Clements' transfer requests.



staff photo by Bill [illegible]

Man in charge

Jim Clements, the principal credited with making Samuel Gompers effective with its students, relaxes against a graffiti—marred door

On some occasions Dr. Brewer, a regional superintendent, has responded to racial tension between Clements and parents. "But by most parents most of the time, he's extremely well respected," she said. "Parents understand success."

Mrs. Brewer also said she has many more complaints from parents in other schools. "If I had all schools like Gompers," she added, "there'd be nothing for me to do."

★ ★ ★

Jim Clements was born 40 years ago in Philadelphia, the child of a tilesetter and his wife. He wanted to be an actor.

"Teaching was the last thing I would ever do," he said. "I went to an undergraduate school (Muhlenburg College in Allentown, Pa.) where to be a teacher was an admission you couldn't do anything else."

Upon graduation Clements was awarded a drama scholarship to the University of Alabama. He was set to go, but for one thing. His fiancee told him to choose between the South and her.

He went to Temple University, in Philadelphia. He needed a job, he explained, and one was available along with a master's degree in special education at Temple. It was a cooperative program of teaching handicapped children and taking graduate courses.

"I hated it. I almost quit at Christmas."

Clements soon began to take more speech and drama classes. "But where was that going to take me? It was at that time, I began to enjoy education." He went on to earn his doctorate in education from Temple.

Clements became a principal, he said, by accident. He had been teaching seven years when his principal suggested he take the principal's examination. It wasn't being given yearly as in the past, so Clements seized the opportunity.

"I came out second on the list," he said, "but I had no courses or certification in administration. So they sent me to summer school, and in 1970, to Gompers."

Five years from now, Clements still expects to be principal of Gompers or some other school. The summer had renewed him, he said, that and his trips to the theaters in New York, composing for and playing the organ at his Lutheran church, and visiting his three children who live with his estranged wife.

One other thing has buoyed him. This summer 80 parents bought teaching materials and he trained them to tutor their children who had fallen behind in one subject or another. "That's encouraging," he said. "I feel good about that."

Incidently, the schools Clements sought transfer to were in even tougher neighborhoods than Gompers'.

Third in a Series

September 10, 1981

Richmond school succeeds with project's raw material

By JOHN MCMANUS
Ledger-Star Staff Writer

RICHMOND — "*Eenie meenie miny moe. (Clap)*

"Catch a nigger by his toe." (Clap)

Two small girls, black hair braided and pigtailed, stand opposite each other on a warm spring day. Hands up, they slap each other's palms to the ageless rhyme all but abandoned beyond the ghetto.

Fifty grassless feet away, sitting in front of the screen door of a brick housing project, a plump woman menacingly raises a thin green belt.

"Shut up!" she yells. "Y'all hear me talking."

Almost unnoticed at her feet is a boy of about 9, wearing a shiny red baseball warm-up jacket, down on all fours. His brown face is perfectly proportioned like that of a child modeling coordinated shorts and jerseys in a glossy newspaper ad.

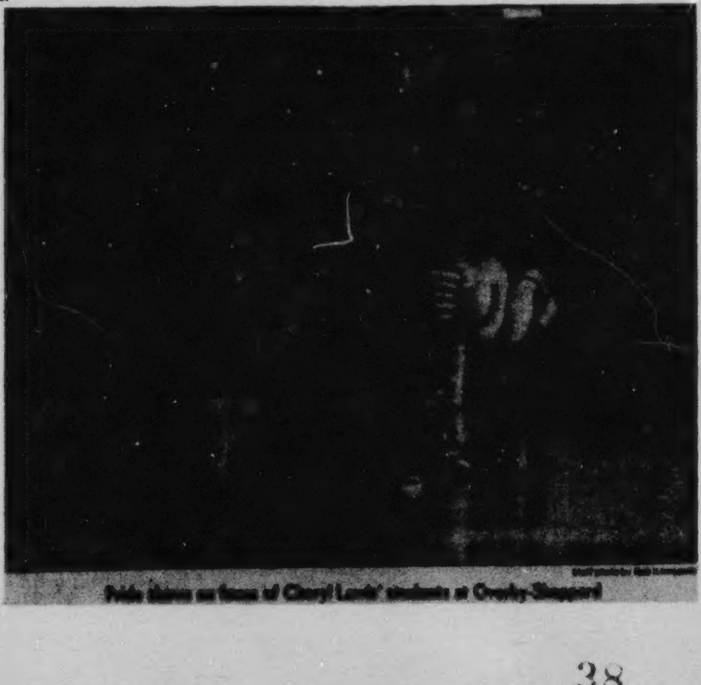
The boy swirls a white rubber band, picking up dust and insect debris, and sucks it into his mouth like a strand of spaghetti.

"He's retarded," the woman says. "Ate some lead paint when he was young. It messed up his head."

This project provides the raw material for Overby-Sheppard School, which is in the same block, at the top of a deep ravine since filled in by the city.

The school's property line is distinct. The grass begins there and slopes down to the 3-year-old building of glass, brick and stained wood. An array of glass doors opens on highly polished floors. And plants in sawed whiskey barrels toss up fountains of green.

Principal Herbert L. Crockett describes his school as an "oasis" in this ramshackle neighborhood known as Highland Park.



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Pride shows on faces of Cheryl Lewis' students at Overby-Sheppard

All 466 of his students come from the neighborhood; 460 are black and 76 percent are poor enough to qualify for free federal lunches. Yet 61 percent of Overby-Sheppard's students read on grade level and the school's fourth-graders score overall in the 64th percentile nationally on the standardized tests the state requires. That's 14 points above the U.S. average.

The students' performance makes Overby-Sheppard an oasis in Richmond. Indeed, it would be a rare find in any run-down neighborhood in America.

"In order for a school to do well, particularly with inner-city boys and girls," says Principal Crockett, "first they must be made to feel good about themselves. If a teacher tells me, 'I can teach that child, but I don't have to love him,' that teacher is in trouble with me."

Affection. "That's a must," the 46-year-old principal tells his staff, from curriculum specialists to custodians. "It's simply not negotiable. Inner-city kids need that special touch. They need to know you love them. Some don't get that kind of love at home."

Caring, says Crockett, who was raised on a farm not far from Richmond, gives the school almost parental rights, particularly the right to demand that a child behave and learn.

"If he knows you love him," he says of the core-city child, "you can yell at him, even snatch him. But if he knows you're hostile, he'll bellow as soon as you lay a hand on him."

* * *

As late as 1964, when the complexion of this neighborhood was changing, a Richmond city planner called Highland Park "an almost ideal community." That same year, an editorial in a Richmond newspaper praised it as "a natural community."

But by 1970 the neighborhood had changed so much even the churches were packing up and moving. By 1978, a Richmond redevelopment official conceded that Highland Park was "sliding fast."

Herb Crockett negotiates the narrow streets of Highland Park, his stationwagon passing Victorian houses with gingerbread carpentry at porch and roof eaves. Some of the old homes now stare out blankly, windows covered with plywood cataracts.

"This neighborhood changed faster than any in the city. Folks were running in one end and out the other," Crockett comments. He points to a large wood frame house close to the intersection which marks Highland Park's center. "My mother used to clean that house. She was a domestic.

"Once upon a time, Highland Park was a kind of stopping off place for the better black families. But most sold their houses and moved to Henrico County. Highland Park has a high crime rate, drug addiction, break-ins. Black folks don't want to die any more than white folks."

At the center of Highland Park, Crockett parks and takes a long look at a large brick schoolhouse.

He remembers it in orange flames on a black Friday night in February, four years ago. Old Highland Park Elementary School. He was principal. One of his students helped torch it. Crockett tracked him down, had him confess to the fire marshal. "He got 10 years," Crockett says.

Wherever Crockett parks this afternoon, he is recognized. Parents and former students call him onto their porches.

"The parents in this community," he says, "I love 'em to death. And they love me. There aren't many homes in all of Highland Park that I haven't been to. . . I've spoken at most of the churches."

In 1972, when Crockett became the first black principal of Highland Park Elementary, test scores were below the 30th percentile. The school was overcrowded. Court-ordered busing had just begun in Richmond and tensions were high.

"I used to have to stand in the hall all the time," Crockett recalls. "In those days I suspended students for a week. There were just brawls. I was positively mean up there."

At his insistence, the school was pared in size. Test scores rose consistently and discipline problems disappeared. "I haven't had a suspension this year, not one serious fight," Crockett boasts.

"When he came to Highland Park," says Gertrude Hewlett, 57, a custodial helper, "the children turned altogether different."

Why?

"The principal tells us to pat 'em. Call 'em 'honey.' Some of 'em may be very 'sturbed from home. But they come and they're real good."

Not all of Overby-Sheppard's staff call children "honey" and pat them.

At 11 a.m. most fifth-graders in one class are defining nouns. Mary is building an impressive chain of pencils, sticking the sharpened end of one into the eraser of the next.

"Shut up, Erica," the teacher scolds one girl. "I'm displeased," she tells the class, "because you should have been able to put the meaning on the paper. This isn't the first day that you've seen that."

Mary is up to eight pencils now and her achievement is attracting the attention of almost everyone in the class except the teacher, who is seated at her desk looking over the papers of

Staff photo by [illegible]

Overby-Sheppard 3rd-grade teacher Denise Turner uses closeness as a learning tool *several students standing at her side.*

By 11:30, 17 of 36 students are not paying attention to their deskwork. Some are crafty. One young girl has laid her head down in her arm to rest. But before she closes her eyes, she cocks a pencil upright in her other hand. From the teacher's angle, she appears to be writing.

At any given time in the 45-minute period, one-third of the class is paying no attention to school work.

The teachers' performance might be the rule at some urban elementary schools, but not here. A survey of two-thirds of the classrooms showed nearly eight in 10 students paying attention throughout the school day.

Even the secretaries consider themselves instructors.

8:55 a.m. Wednesday. The frantic few minutes before the school day begins find Anthony, a first-grader, staring at the fish in the school office aquarium.

Head secretary Esther Strickland is checking his homework. "You're making your 5's backwards, Sugar," she says. "Here, let me show you.

"He's just so precious," she remarks to a passing teacher as Anthony leaves for class.

Demand for academic performance is the flip side of Overby-Sheppard's atmosphere of caring. Says Crockett: "Teachers set high objectives and they don't let kids off the hook for anything. They don't hide behind the excuse that poor kids can't learn."

But, he adds, you have to work harder here than with a class of kids who are already educated and already articulate. They're going to learn in spite of the teacher.

Urban schools are in trouble, Crockett theorizes, because "many white and black teachers aren't willing to work that hard."

So Crockett and his curriculum specialist Dorothy Dungee monitor classes often. And if with their help a teacher can't become successful, "I'll tell him or her, 'My aim is to get rid of you,' " says Crockett. "Now what are you going to do?"

In nine years, he estimates he has fired one teacher and persuaded at least seven others to leave. "I have the best staff I've had in 10 years now," he says.

"He gets on us," one teacher explains. "We have our little conferences. But he's been fair with me."

As with other successful city schools, students' progress is tested frequently in basic skills such as math and reading. Every teacher uses the same series of texts. And students must pass each chapter test before proceeding. About 10 percent are held back each year.

The curriculum at Overby-Sheppard leans heavily toward basic skills. Science, geography, civics and others come later if there is time. All teachers must spend the morning teaching mathematics, reading and language arts, says Mrs. Dungee.

Overby-Sheppard at a glance

Overby-Sheppard School, Richmond; Grades pre-K to 5, 466 students; 99 percent black, 1 percent white; free lunch: 77 percent; proportion reading on grade level: 61 percent; national test scores: fourth graders, 64th percentile; average class size observed: 24; average teacher salary: $16,400; average teacher experience: 13.6 years; daily attendance: 94 percent; mobility: 37 students left and 31 entered during the school year.

Gertie Redd, 28, is sitting on her front sidewalk, chair reversed under her on a fine spring day. With her two daughters she lives in the housing project next door to Overby-Sheppard. "The school is nice," she says. "I like the teachers there. They take up so much time with the kids.

"The principal is wonderful. He'll hear your side and listen to the kids. He doesn't jump to conclusions."

Ms. Redd's eldest daughter previously attended another elementary school, she explains. The daughter says she didn't learn much, but now, she says, she is making steady progress.

"Most principals don't take time to call a parent behind a problem," she says. Then she confides: "He never had to cuss at me or lay me out."

Down the child-strewn street, a woman wearing a bandanna looks through a screen.

"How many children do you have at Overby-Sheppard?" she is asked.

"It's four, I think."

There are 10 children. . . age 3 months to 15 years. . . living in the small, neat apartment where religious radio programs usually are on and the television usually is off. . . except for cartoons.

"They learn too much from TV," says the mother, who looks older than her 33 years. "They have too many half-naked peoples on TV and cursin'."

"How is the school?"

"It's right good."

Crockett believes the schools' success in attracting parental support at home and getting parents to come to school are pillars of Overby-Sheppard's success. "The mere fact that a kid knows that his parent will come when I call helps," he explains.

"My strategy has been that in order to get parents to PTA meetings, you have to have drawing cards." One Tuesday night, more than 400 parents came to the school which has a student body of 466. Before the evening was over, three black and white television sets were raffled off.

"If you can get the children to come back to school, the parents come, too," Crockett adds with a wink. Overby-Sheppard has a 60-voice choir, and scores of girls in black leotards and boys in black suits. . . and all in derbies and white gloves. . . who tap-danced at the meeting while the late Fats Waller crooned through a phonograph: "No one to talk with; I'm on the shelf . . . Ain't misbehavin', I'm saving my love for y-o-o-ou."

★ ★ ★

The school is quiet now, after hours. Herb Crockett sits in his tennis whites.

"There's not a single family out there," he begins, waving in the direction of the neighborhood, "who doesn't want their children to be just as intelligent, just as articulate, just as interesting as middle-class children.

"Some parents push the heck out of a child. But you've got another type who doesn't understand the importance of education. They're drinking. They're tired. 'Just go ask your mama, boy.'

"She doesn't know how to conjugate a verb. It's very difficult to be unable to help or to admit you don't know. The disadvantaged child doesn't have one strike, he has many strikes.

"You ask if I can take these kids and run them through Overby-Sheppard and make them equal to (suburban) Colonial Heights sixth-graders. The Colonial Heights kids would do better on the standardized tests. But the Overby-Sheppard kids are going to do a hell of a lot better than they did in the past."

Fourth in a Series

September 11, 1981

Ghetto school's triumph built by active parents

By JOHN McMANUS
Ledger-Star Staff Writer

NEW HAVEN, CONN. — *In 1968, officials of this old New England education and industrial center evaluated its core-city schools. The results were disappointing, but they matched national patterns: By sixth grade, 50 to 80 percent of inner-city youngsters were reading behind grade level.*

Students were uninterested and disruptive. Parents were alienated. Attendance of students and teachers was poor.

That same year, backed by the Ford Foundation, Yale University child psychiatrist James P. Comer began a unique educational program at two inner-city schools. One of the schools dropped out, but Martin Luther King School hung on.

Now its test scores, reading levels and attendance rates top New Haven's inner-city schools and equal national achievement levels.

Driven off Alabama's steaming cotton fields by the boll weevil and a desire to be free of the stigma then of being black, James Comer's father came North during World War I. His mother arrived later, joining the stream of black Americans uprooted by the Great Depression and seeking new opportunities.

Comer, 46, grew up in a poor neighborhood in East Chicago, Ind. His mother a domestic, his father a custodian in a steel mill, James was the second of five children. Comer's mother had no formal education; his father only seven years. Yet the family valued education as a means of advancement.

The Comers lived on the fringe of the richest part of town, so young Jimmy attended school with the children from homes his mother cleaned. There were three other blacks in his class. One, Comer reports, is now an alcoholic, the second is in a mental institution, and the last in jail.

Yet among the five Comer children, there are now 13 college and post-graduate degrees.

"I didn't realize," he recalls, "why the same kids who could read the Bible OK in church had problems in school, got in fights and didn't succeed.

"But now I know the difference was that their parents were not as supportive and able to make the system work for them. When there was any problem in school, my mother was there. So we generally received good support in school from teachers."

The most powerful force in American schools today, argues Comer, are the students. And to reach the students, particularly in inner-city areas, teachers must have the active help of parents.

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The man who made a school work

James P. Comer in front of wall paintings on a school he turned into a success

Involved parents boost ghetto school

Typically, that doesn't happen.

"The school staff and the school program are sometimes strangers and foreign bodies in the neighborhood — subject to distrust, rejection and attack," Comer explains. "In many schools the staff is no longer a natural extension of parental authority."

So beginning in 1968, Comer headed a team from the Yale Child Study Center to construct a program in two of New Haven's lowest-achieving urban schools that would build a bridge between school and home. The team also instructed teachers in the rudiments of child psychology as a means of coping with the disruptions plaguing ghetto schools.

The spine of black New Haven, Dixwell Avenue, rests at one end on the campus of Yale University, in the shadow of a building reminiscent of a medieval cathedral. Despite its Gothic stone spires, it's merely an ornate gymnasium.

It's the last extravagance you'll see bordering Dixwell. Walk several blocks. The Holy Ghost Miracle Revival Church is on your left.

"Deliverance! Healing! Salvation!" promises a banner draped over what may once have been a chain drugstore. Across the trash-littered street, a cold spring breeze blows through the ribs of broken casement windows and into the lives of the folks who live in "the PJs," the projects.

Twenty feet of pavement separate agony from ecstasy.

On the next block, an early collection is being taken. The till fills with crumpled dollar bills before 8 a.m. The spirit sought in this corner store is extra dry gin. Seagram's is preferred.

A nearby trash barrel overflows with empty bottles. Some have shattered on the curbside, the clear half-pints becoming the crystal in a mosaic of stained glass. The amber once held beer. The emerald, wine.

A half-dozen blocks north sit the concrete slab bunkers of Martin Luther King School. All but five of its 285 students are black. The five are Hispanic. Ninety-six percent of the children are poor enough to qualify for free school meals.

Eleven years ago, the Metropolitan Achievement Tests administered to fourth-graders here indicated students were trailing national averages by 19 months in reading and 18 in mathematics. Four years ago, fourth-graders lagged nine months behind in reading and five in math. By 1980, fourth-graders scored at national grade levels in both subjects.

A survey of teachers last April showed 51 percent of all children here reading at or beyond grade level, as measured by their progress completing a series of reading texts.

Midafternoon. The kids will be home soon, Derrick in eighth grade and Jamel in fourth. Reluctantly, 33-year-old Carolyn Lawhorn flips off the small television set, her knothole into the sordid lives of the handsome white folks whose affairs, abortions and frequent amnesia sell detergent on daytime TV.

It provides amusing escape from a long, federally-subsidised apartment building of women who carry small pistols to protect their homes and cars from break-ins.

Derrick, 15, has spina bifida, a spinal birth defect which has left him able to walk, but only with braces. As a first-grader, he was confined to a wheelchair, so his mother accompanied him to school most days. Comer's program at King School was in its infancy.

"I tried to stay out of the classrooms," she says, "but I still wanted to be available in case he needed me. After a month, they told me, 'You're here every morning, do you want to work?' "

So she became one of a small number of parents hired at the minimum wage to work as teachers' aides. As her involvement grew, she was named to the School Advisory Committee, a dozen members comprising parents, administrators and teachers. That committee recommends policy changes directly to the principal. Nothing at the school is beyond its review.

About five years ago, she served as an aide for a new teacher, a young, liberal white woman from New York City.

"The kids were taking advantage of her," Mrs. Lawhorn says. "She was easy to hit on and talk back to. She felt too sorry for the kids to educate them."

Mrs. Lawhorn brought the situation before the advisory committee. The teacher was approached about the problem, and, after a month, agreed to leave King.

Mrs. Lawhorn believes parents definitely have power at King. "If the same situation were to come up again, the same thing would happen," she says.

"Sharing decision-making with staff and parents — that's the most critical difference between this school and many others," says Principal Stephen Signore, a 257-pounder who turned down an offer from the old Chicago Cardinals football team in favor of teaching. "The principal has the final say," he explains, "but everybody gets input."

The secret of King's success, Signore says, lies in a simple theory: When people feel they have some power over their destiny, they will assume responsibility for making things work.

That sense of responsibility is real, even to skeptical city parents. "Basically, you felt

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Pupils rush to class at Martin Luther King School

Martin Luther King School at a glance

Martin Luther King School; New Haven, Conn.; Grades K-4, 265 students; 98 percent black; 2 percent Hispanic; free lunch: 96 percent; proportion reading on grade level: 51 percent; national test scores: fourth grade tested, 2 months behind national grade level; average class size observed: 22; average teacher salary: $16,000; average years experience: 10; daily experience: 97 percent; mobility: 10 students left and 22 entered during the school year.

like you ran the school," says Jean Crockett, a former member of the advisory committee who served for six years.

Signore structures his day around parents. "You don't need to make an appointment," says Lorinda Thompson, another parent and past member of the advisory committee. "You know that the door's open."

Besides working on the advisory committee, as paid tutors and as volunteers in the school, parents also perform the traditional PTA activities, such as raising money, attending workshops with teachers and preparing potluck suppers. To encourage big turnouts, Signore raffles off $100 bills and sponsors student performances.

Where once 10 to 15 parents showed up, attendance now is in the hundreds, he reports.

The presence of parents in school, Signore argues, improves children's behavior. "When a kid sees a mother in a group activity with his teacher, then the teacher is no longer the enemy. And the mother doesn't blame the school when the child is disciplined."

Carolyn Lawhorn says when the teacher from New York lost control of the fourth grade in which she was assisting, she as a parent was able to restore it "because I know all the kids' parents and they wouldn't want me telling them what they did. And they know I will."

Mrs. Lawhorn became a community link more trusted than a teacher might be.

Rather than resenting the intrusion of parents into the life of the school and even into the classroom, teachers seem to appreciate their presence. "There's a war in other schools between the parents and the teachers," says Amy Walker, a reading specialist at King.

"The parents in the other school I worked in weren't allowed in the school. All the parents heard were negative things about the school. It was in a better neighborhood and better-equipped, but what happened was appalling.. Teachers were hit and spit at by children. Here, that's very rare."

King also tries to foster bonds between teachers and children. Classes are arranged so a child has a teacher for two years rather than one.

Discipline is also handled unconventionally. At least in Comer's theory, if Tanya punches Carmen, she is not scolded. She is separated from the class to complete her work and later the reason for the punch and its future consequences are discussed.

No fights were observed during a visit last spring. Only one student, a first-grader, was observed in an isolation room. He was sent there for acting up in class. After a furious burst of work, unsupervised, he began to fly his pencil around the desk, making a slight hissing sound. Although he did not continue to disrupt his class, 45 minutes of his time were spent piloting an Eberhard-Faber No. 2.

"He's green. He's scaly. He's as tall as a skyscraper! He breathes fire."

It's 10:35, language arts time for Bonnie Pachesa's class of second- and third-graders. They are copying from a book about Godzilla.

Mrs. Pachesa is not in the room. She's running off purple dittos at the office. She will not return for 15 minutes, but during that time only two of the 14 students now in the class will be inattentive.

Such self-motivation is unusual outside of elite private or suburban public schools. "They're an industrious group," Mrs. Pachesa says later. "But another group might fall apart in such a situation."

Classes here have a certain informality which the students seem to enjoy. "I like this school better," says Tanya Smith, a fourth-grader who transferred in. "They're nicer. They let you go to the bathrooms. At my (former) school, they'd make you have an accident."

Indeed, most of the day the halls carry light traffic of little girls exchanging intelligence and boys bending into sideways Y's replaying the late Bruce Lee's latest Kung-Fu manuever. Students paid attention about 75 percent of the time they were in class, a survey of eight of the 12 classes indicated.

At least one teacher, Margaret Thomas, believes the laxity at King robs scholastic performance. "When it's time for learning," she says, "we can't have kids whooping and leaving the room in a steady stream. I don't call that freedom. I call that cheating a child out of an education."

Mrs. Thomas is quick to add, however, that "Martin Luther King is perceived as one of the better, if not the best, school in urban New Haven. All of my time in New Haven, I've spent trying to get into this school. The amount of parental involvement is exceptional."

Signore does not appear to pressure his teachers, except in one area. "We expect kids to be at grade level," he says. "Everyone expects this."

Comer believes his two-pronged approach to improving schools — sharing power with parents and staff, and treating behavior problems with methods derived from child psychology — can work anywhere with little additional cost.

It's a formula, however, that has been criticized by some others trying to improve urban schools. One of the directors of Milwaukee's efforts to turn around 20 ghetto schools there says, "It's hard enough to educate children, without having to teach their parents."

And Dr. Ronald R. Edmonds of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, perhaps the nation's best-known effective schools researcher, believes it would be difficult to teach Comer's psychology procedures to every school's staff.

Comer is undismayed. He points to large gains in standardized test scores reported by another New Haven school to which his approach recently was transplanted.

New Haven School Superintendent Dr. Gerald Tirozzi is impressed enough to teach other principals in core-city schools Comer's methods.

"There is no profound psychological or sociological knowledge that is needed to change a school. You can do it intuitively," Comer responds. "We are trying to develop the theory so any principal can learn to implement the program."

Will the inner-city schools that adopt Comer's method be able to compete with good schools in New Haven's suburbs?

"It can produce an environment that's good enough to give the kids the foundation so they can move on wherever they wish," he replies. But, he adds, measuring core-city schools against those in the suburbs may be comparing apples with oranges.

"We suspect some of the (poor and black) kids with the best academic potential are in private, parochial or suburban schools in the first place."

Even so, Comer maintains, effective schools should be able to meet or exceed national averages regardless of their neighborhood.

Staff photo by John [illegible]

Reading help

Amy Walker questions a student while helping him with assignments

Fifth in a Series

September 12, 1981

Schools

Crux of learning found in good teacher

By JOHN McMANUS
Ledger-Star Staff Writer

PORTSMOUTH — The clock reads 11:08, and these 19 children, the slowest learners in the second grade, haven't had a break this morning. There has been no squirming, though, no dropping of books or heightened interest in the pencil sharpener, no longing glances at the clock or lunch pails.

In fact it is the teacher who notices the time and says with some surprise: "You haven't had a break, have you?"

Without a word, four of the students line up outside the closet toilet in the back corner of the classroom. A small, brown-haired boy named Sonny posts himself outside the door. A child leaves; Sonny inspects the bathroom for cleanliness. Only Vidal is called back to clean up a spill. He does so without complaint.

At most, four students line up outside the bathroom. The others are copying from the board as teacher Wilhelmenia Barnes writes math problems.

At 11:17, without turning from the board, Mrs. Barnes says: "I'm going to assume that those of you who went to the restroom have had water, are back in your seats and have started your work."

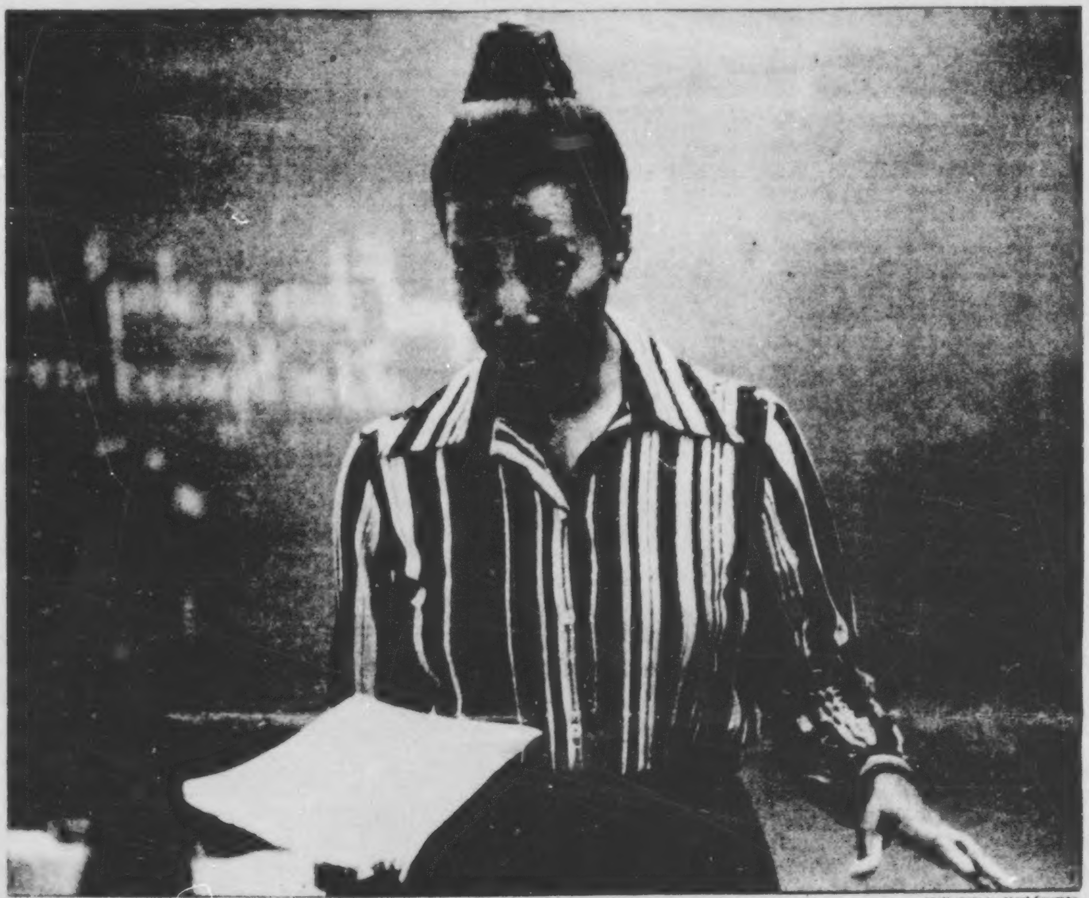
The assumption is correct.

"I wish I could put Wilhelmenia Barnes in a can and spray her all over the school," says Churchland's Principal Cecelia Curcio. "She takes kids academically where no other teacher can."

Good teachers who demand that children learn and then find ways to make them want to study are the foundation of effective urban schools. And Churchland Elementary has many fine teachers. A three-day survey found 80 percent of the students paying attention at any one time. Two-thirds of the school's classrooms were surveyed.

In the 1980 standardized tests, grades two through six averaged in the 65th percentile, putting them 15 points ahead of the national norm. When measured precisely, 56 percent of Churchland's 830 students were working in the appropriate reading text last May to be considered on grade level. Both academic yardsticks show consistent gains in recent years.

No other elementary school in Tidewater serving as many free federal lunches to poor children, 32 percent, and enrolling as many black students, 41 percent, performs as well.



Staff photo by Mort Fryman

Wilhelmenia Barnes

'She takes kids academically where no other teacher can,' says her principal

Wilhelmenia Barnes, born in Norfolk 43 years ago and a teacher for 17 years, is sitting in her classroom, something she rarely does earlier than the present time, 2:30 p.m.

She looks tired now after her last students have filed out. A boy with blue agates for eyes enters and lays a quarter on her desk — almost enough to buy an apple these days. He's an alumnus of her class.

"I just wanted to give it to ya," he says grinning sheepishly. She returns it. And as he leaves, she shouts, "but I will need it next week."

Teachers at Churchland are instructed to have no more than three reading levels in their classes. Mrs. Barnes admits she has five. She tests students carefully in the first weeks of school, even before Portsmouth's diagnostic tests are given, to find out what level each child is on.

"You can't get anything out of a child unless you start where he is," she explains. "They must have some success at something each day."

Showing care also is essential, she says. Some slow learners expect to be rejected, so they are easily slighted. "The things they bring, you have to stop and respond. They are always looking for this attention," Mrs. Barnes says.

She earns the class' cooperation, she says, by letting them make their own classroom rules at the beginning of the year.

She also involves the parents. "Many parents at first distrust teachers," she explains. It is easy for parents of inner city children to make common cause with their children against a school that "doesn't understand our kind of folks," urban educators say. "You've got to win them," agrees Mrs. Barnes.

Incentives for children are also important. Mrs. Barnes pops corn or plays favorite records when they do well.

Mrs. Barnes usually holds the eyes of most of her 19 students. "I am concerned about them learning at all times, no matter what," she says.

"You know, my children have really become workaholics. And they seem to enjoy it."

Despite good teachers such as Mrs. Barnes, "Professor" Mary Anne Rudy, and George Andrews, the man who turns sixth graders into students, some of the professional staff here say privately that the school expects less from its black students than from its whites.

Churchland Elementary has an unusual mix of students. At 7 a.m. each school day, a half dozen yellow Portsmouth City School buses roll down Turnpike Boulevard in Portsmouth and comb the sand lawns of the Jeffry Wilson Housing project and the Mount Hermon area for the neighborhood's bumper crop of youngsters.

It's an uneventful 20-minute ride from black Portsmouth across the bridge over the Western Branch of the Elizabeth River to white Portsmouth. The buses turn on Dogwood Avenue and shatter the peaceful morning, in this neighborhood of loblolly pines and brick homes, with their groaning springs and Bronx cheer exhausts. They disgorge their children into classrooms where they sit side-by-side with those from more affluent Churchland.

At The Ledger-Star's request, Churchland Elementary's reading specialist Peggy Thomas separated the reading records of a random sample numbering 100 of the 250 children bused from across the river. The analysis uncovered a gap in performance between the poorest children and the rest of the school.

Measuring reading level precisely, 44 percent of the sample was reading at or beyond grade level. Although 12 percentage points less than the overall school average of 56 percent, the performance is still superior to most urban schools.

In addition, only 5 percent of the bused students were so far behind grade level they risked failing. Progress made in mathematics appears to be strong. The federally funded remedial program reports gains averaging 1.8 grade levels for the last school year.

The reading levels of Churchland's students bused across town, however, rank below those at other effective urban schools The Ledger-Star visited.

There is nearly unanimous agreement at Churchland, as indeed with educators nationally, that the environment from which poor children come is different enough from the more advantaged middle-class lifestyle to cause a gap in academic performance between the two *groups*. Such a gap may not exist, or be reversed, however, between individual students.

But at least two teachers at Churchland suggest that individual black students get submerged in the average expectation here. They also suspect the gap between groups here is wider than it should be because the leadership expects and asks less of children from broken and poorer homes.

"I think what they expect from these children from Jeffry Wilson has already been set in their minds, which makes it hard for them to communicate with them," one teacher says. She asked that her name be withheld to protect her position.

It's an easy belief to acquire, the teacher concedes, "because the children are here with the attitude, 'I'm from Jeffry Wilson and I'm not going to do much.'"

Churchland Elementary at a glance

Churchland Elementary School, Portsmouth; Grades 2-6; 830 students; 41 percent black, 58 percent white; free lunch 32 percent; proportion reading on grade level 55 percent; national test scores: all-grades average is 65th percentile; average class size observed 25; average teacher salary $14,000; average years experience 11; daily attendance 95 percent; mobility: 55 students left and entered during the school year.

The finding that Churchland Elementary's poor children are achieving below national norms at least in reading level does not surprise Mrs. Curcio, the principal.

"Of course, you're going to be more handicapped if you're poor," she says. "If the children do not have the opportunity for experiences, then that's just a major factor, no matter how much mama stresses education."

"It would blow your mind to know how many children in Portsmouth have never even seen the ocean," Mrs. Curcio says. "That's why we have more field trips than any other elementary school in this city.

"My expectations are very high," she adds. "And I'll never change them."

Says Mrs. Thomas, the reading specialist: "I do think that given normal children, we can raise them to national averages, but if they come from a background where they lack normal experiences, then they lack something when they come to us. It's a handicap.

"I don't think you can say you can catch them up. You can try.

"You know what really makes the difference?" she continues. "It's the teacher. You can give a school any amount of money, any amount of equipment, any program, but the most important factor is the teacher."

Sixth in a Series

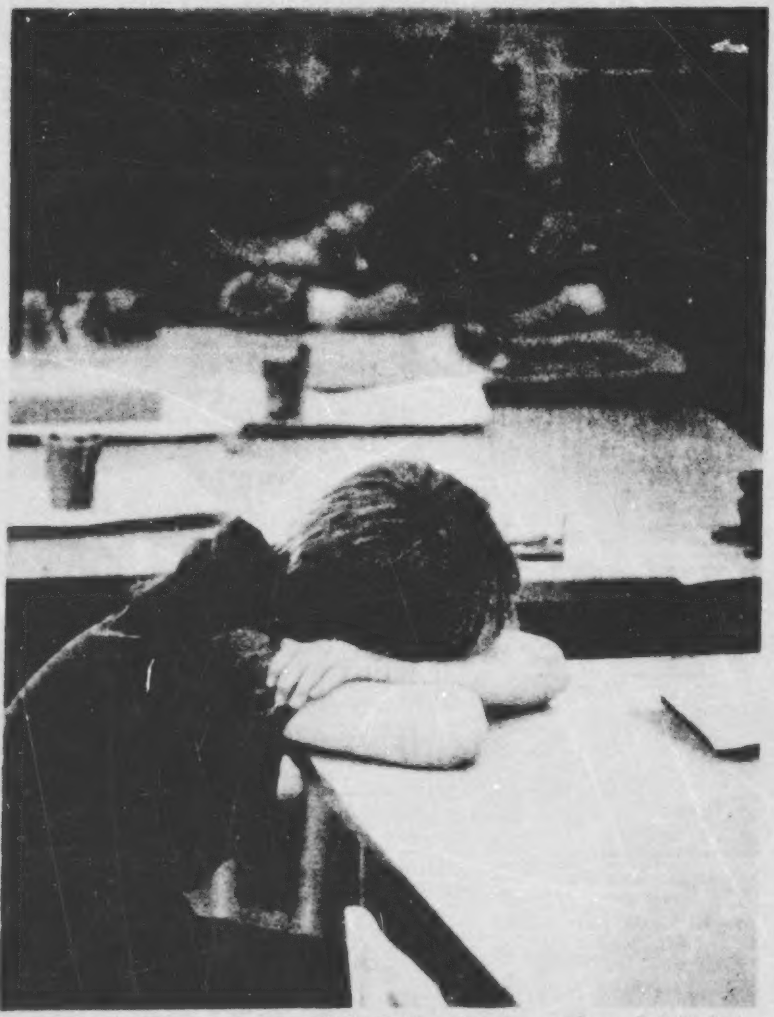
September 14, 1981

Time waste plaguing schools

RENA B.
HT
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The sign originally said Rena B. Wright Elementary School

Staff photos by Rob Kinmonth



This student is getting little benefit from his class at Rena B. Wright

By JOHN McMANUS
Ledger-Star Staff Writer

CHESAPEAKE—Almost immediately a visitor notices that more is missing here than four letters from the sign that should spell Rena B. Wright Elementary School on the building's facade.

At 10:11 one Wednesday morning, a teacher, a grandmotherly woman with more than 20 years in the classroom, listens closely to the five students sitting around her reading and answering her questions.

Twelve feet away, eight students lie on a carpet, their books before them.

One boy stands in the corner, his nose pressed against the wall.

Seven of the teacher's students are in another classroom, called an Extension Center, where they complete work sheets and play word and number games under the supervision of two teacher's aides.

10:19: Three girls leave the rug, walk across the room to a bookshelf near the door and sit below it on another rug fragment. At first glance they appear to be reading. But a closer look reveals they are turning the pages at a feverish rate, stopping only when a particular illustration snags their attention.

On the other side of the room, the jostling on the rug abandoned by the girls intensifies enough that three boys are about to be asked to take their seats.

10:23: Three students are now seated in desks. One, a young Pittsburgh Steelers' fan, is constructing a corral with crayons. The other two students assist. The corral will take 12 minutes and two boxes of crayons before the blond boy wearing Franco Harris' No. 32 destroys it with one swipe.

Only the students surrounding the teacher are working now. The boy in the corner has begun sobbing. The teacher tries to comfort him, but has no success.

Time waste an ill of school systems

10:25: The boy in the corner makes a dash for his seat with his flannel-shirted arm covering his eyes. The teacher has disbanded her group. No student in the class is working, so she tries a word game.

"I'm thinking about a word that begins with an H and has seven letters," she announces. No further clues are offered. No letters are to be guessed as in the game of Hangman; only the word will do.

"Helicopter!" shouts one student. The 10-letter word rates a head shake, no.

"Hospital!"

"No," the teacher says, "but that's a good guess. That has about the right number of letters."

The guesses continue. None has seven letters.

10:30: The teacher is still waiting for her seven-letter word beginning with H, but the students have moved on to other interests. It's as if she's not in the room. No one is working.

10:32: The game apparently over, the mystery word unrevealed and perhaps forgotten, the teacher dispatches students to the lavatory in small groups.

10:35: Students arrive from the extension center. More are dispatched to the lavatory. No one is working.

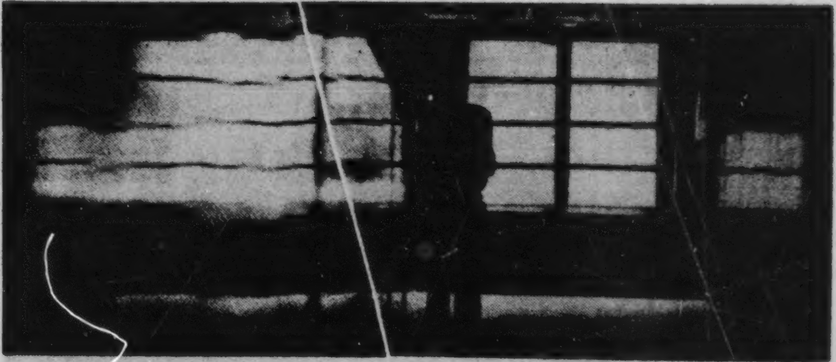
10:40: A math problem is assigned; 13 of the 21 students now in the class tackle it. The others continue chatting or dally in taking out their math books.

Thirty minutes spent with the top-achieving second-graders, 12 white children and 9 black, results in consistent instruction only for the children who left the classroom for the extension center. And while they were gone, class size was just right for instruction or discussion that might not have been possible with an entire class.

But that didn't happen in this class. And this teacher's classroom was hardly an exception during the week the school was visited last spring.

Rena B. Wright Elementary School was selected because its mix of poor and middle-class children, its test scores and its reading levels are typical of core city schools described in reports nationally. Wright has by no means the lowest report card in Tidewater.

Case studies in St. Louis, Baltimore, London, England, and other cities indicate classrooms like the one described above are common to urban schools nationwide and in other Western industrial socities. This classroom is not trhe only one at Wright, however, where teachers are not teaching and students are not learning.


Staff photo by [illegible]

A student kills some time in a hallway at Rena B. Wright

Step in on another class down the hall. A teacher stoops while working the rows of her fourth-graders. She moves slowly, patiently. But it's like watching someone push a mower with dull blades through high grass. The heads of students drop into their books at her approach and pop up to carry on a conversation as soon as she has passed.

Or watch and listen to a first-grade teacher.

"I will not accept that at all," she says, recoiling from a child's awkward handwriting.

"The papers were not good," she tells the class. "I don't understand at all," she scolds.

Another student timidly brings his paper to the teacher, who says ,"That looks like chicken scratchin', doesn't it?"

Her anger subdues the boy. He doesn't respond.

One student, however, found relief from the criticism. By 9:08 his crossed arms have received his nodding head. His 12-minute nap will not be interrupted, nor perhaps even noticed, by the teacher.

The inattention in the classrooms does not go entirely unnoted, however. One Wright teacher says: "As a public school teacher I really hate to say this, but if I was starting over and I had kids, they'd go to private school. Good teachers are just too few and far between here to risk my child.

"A structured classroom is probably the greatest key to success in teaching; someone who controls with dignity. It totally blows my mind when I see a teacher stand up in front of the class and talk while kids are talking here and there."

Classrooms out of control, complacent teachers, low expectations for poor children — these are the problems that plague Wright and urban schools nationwide. But it is unfair to Wright or any school to imply that all is chaos, or all teachers have given up. There are excellent teachers at Rena B. Wright. Ironically, they prove South Norfolk children can both behave and learn.

Sweetie Speller's second-graders are all business this morning. They have to be. When the teacher is working with one of her reading groups, her eyes and ears also envelop the students doing deskwork.

Across the room with his back to Mrs. Speller, Clarence has stopped working, a victim of restlessness. Less than a minute passes.

"Come here, Clarence," Mrs. Speller calls out. "You're disturbing the boys and girls." She looks into his eyes. "Now go to work,"she says gently.

Later in the class, a child sneezes. "God bless you," the children chorus.

The mixture of teachers surveyed in 13 of Wright's 18 regular classrooms over four days gives the school a time-on-task rating of 68 percent. An average of about two of three students were engaged in a learning task throughout the day's class time. That ranks Wright last among all schools visited by the Ledger-Star in 11 weeks of research into effective schools.

Standardized test scores show that Wright's fourth-graders average in the 37th percentile overall, well below the national norm of 50. Thirty-nine percent of Wright's students are reading at or above grade level as recorded by their progress in the 17-book Holt Ba-

Rena B. Wright Elementary at a glance

Rena B. Wright Elementary School, Chesapeake; Grades K-4; 537 students; 40 percent black, 51 percent white; free lunch: 51 percent; proportion reading on grade level: 30 percent; national test scores: only fourth grade tested, 37th percentile; average class size observed: 23; average teacher salary: $17,000; average teacher's experience: 14 years; daily attendance: 94 percent; mobility: 110 students left and 74 entered during school year.

sic Reading System adopted by the school.

The mix of students at Wright is probably more typical of schools in mid-sized cities than in larger ones. With half its students white and only half eligible for free lunches, Wright's enrollment is both whiter and wealthier than the three most effective urban schools visited by the Ledger-Star.

* * *

Rena B. Wright has many of the same elements as more effective urban schools. The curriculum emphasizes reading, mathematics and writing. The techniques of mastery learning, where students are taught, tested and re-taught until they master skills such as adding and subtracting fractions or making subjects agree with verbs, are standard teaching procedure, according to the principal. And students' progress is recorded, at least by the classroom teacher.

The children seem happy here, although they fear some teachers' rulers. Even students like Stanley, who struts into class in high-heeled boots and whose long brown hair falls on the collar of a studded, black leather jacket, seems to get along with Dennis, the class athlete, a dark-skinned youth clothed in red pants cinctured by a white belt and white Nike sport shoes accented with scarlet stripes.

The teaching staff exhibits a camaraderie here as well. The birthday party held after school one day for the principal showed a certain intimacy. For turning 40, Patricia Pretlow received pink sleepwear. The party seemed almost a family affair.

The similarity with effective schools ends here. Missing from the formula that appears to ensure success at some schools are demanding leadership, a strong initiative to gain parents' cooperation and, perhaps most importantly, confidence that children from this neighborhood can meet national norms.

* * *

Mrs. Pretlow, a handsome and intensely personable woman who became a principal four years ago after earning a master's degree in education from the University of Virginia, knows who her strong and weak teachers are. She could tell a teacher's name from a description of the class behavior.

"I feel they have the potential to be better than average," she says of her faculty. "But I feel they're average. Adults are a little like children. I have to stay on them, keep reminding them of things that need to be done."

Mrs. Pretlow has never fired or transferred a teacher at Wright School. Nor does she expect to. "I still don't feel I've given the weaker teachers all the help they need."

Teachers at Wright praise Mrs. Pretlow. "The kids respect her and look up to her," says one. "She's a person who listens," says another. They also believe she trusts them. Evaluations, they say, occur infrequently.

"This has been a bad year," says Ann Prescott, the recording secretary of Rena B. Wright's Parent-Teacher Association. "We're lucky if we have 25 parents show up at events."

The executive committee of the PTA is meeting in a glass conference room off the school library. Two preschool-age children crawl underfoot. The main topic this morning is the spice sale. Minced onions, sneezeproof pepper and bacon bits are the stuff of the latest fundraiser in a year that has netted contributions of just under $2,000.

The members of the executive committee are all white, despite the school's 40 percent black enrollment. The PTA elected its first black president this year, but she resigned when offered a job. She was one of the few black parents active in the association, the executive committee says.

"We've been trying to get more participation from them (black parents)," says President Connie Carlock, "but we never hear from them at all."

Teachers also complain of a lack of communication with parents. "The 'I don't care' type of parents predominate, maybe 60-40," says Pat Carrow, who works with kindergarteners.

There is also racial animosity, say the teachers, who claim black students distrust white teachers and whites question the authority of black teachers. Last spring a black mother marched her son into a classroom after school "with the express purpose of allowing the child to slap the teacher," says Reading Specialist Barbara Porter.

"White teachers hold back on disciplining black kids," comments one teacher, who, like others who are critical, doesn't want her name mentioned, "for fear of parents' bad reaction. And black teachers feel the same way about white kids."

Conversation in the teachers' lounge reflects a certain fatalism about the children at Wright. "We know the schools that have better kids," a kindergarten teacher says. "There's only one school worse than us.

"We couldn't beat Western Branch (a school in one of Chesapeake's wealthiest neighborhoods) with the best teachers in the city.

"If reading isn't important at home, you can stand on your head. There's just so much you can do."

Similar comments could be overheard in any lounge where inner-city schoolteachers relax — even in the most effective urban schools. But at some schools, including Wright, the attitude behind these comments appears to reduce the demands on students, diminishing the energy of the instruction, more than it does at the effective schools visited.

The afternoon announcements are over; another school day is through. Pat Pretlow's eyes are encircled. She is losing a fight with a spring cold.

"My expectations may be higher than else's in the school," she says. "To some teachers there's a certain kind of kid who comes from a certain type of community. Maybe they don't feel the kids in this community are capable.

"This thing that you've seen, I've seen it, too.

"When you enter a new situation," she says of her three-years tenure at Rena B. Wright, "you don't make a lot of drastic changes. You'll make trouble for yourself.

"But next year," Mrs. Pretlow said last spring, "I intend to move teachers around. We'll call in (curriculum) supervisors to help them. And I will ask them to do outside reading this summer."

Seventh in a Series

September 15, 1981

How to grade your school

By JOHN McMANUS
Ledger-Star Staff Writer

Does your child attend an effective elementary school?

Even if you have no children attending public schools, as a rent or mortgage payer you support the schools. And the value of your property rises or falls with the reputation of your neighborhood school. Are you getting your money's worth?

There's no better way to find out than a visit.

Call or drop by the school in your neighborhood. The phone numbers and addresses are listed in the phone directory. Set a date with the principal for at least an hour's visit; better, half a day.

Plan to sit quietly in the rear of classrooms.

Take the attached list, prepared from suggestions of teachers and administrators at effective urban elementary schools, and some note paper. You can answer most of these questions in one visit. Don't let the principal or teachers tell you what happens in school. Make them show you.

All four South Hampton Roads school districts have policies encouraging visits.

NORFOLK: "We feel, of course, that the schools belong to the people," says superintendent Albert L. Ayars. "They have every right, even a responsibility to become involved in education . . . by visiting the schools."

PORTSMOUTH: "The parents are welcome at any time," says superintendent M.E. Alford. "It's a top priority of Portsmouth schools."

VIRGINIA BEACH: "Parents are always welcome at the public schools of Virginia Beach," says superintendent E.E. Brickell, "not only for planned school functions but also for the purpose of viewing classroom activities."

CHESAPEAKE: "We do encourage parents in Chesapeake to visit their child's school as often as they can," says superintendent C. Fred Bateman. "These are, after all, the public's schools."

There are four major areas where a school's effectiveness can be checked.

In the classroom	**Usually**	**Sometimes**	**Rarely**
1. Are most of the students paying attention most of the time? (This is the most important question of all. If the answer here is positive, the school is likely to be effective.)	☐	☐	☐
2. When a student's attention does wander, does the teacher notice promptly and win it back or otherwise demand it?	☐	☐	☐
3. Is 30 to 60 minutes of homework assigned each weekday night?	☐	☐	☐
4. By questions and actions, does the teacher give the impression she or he believes each child can learn? Are most students called on, for example?	☐	☐	☐
5. Are teachers returning homework and assignments graded or with the errors pointed out?	☐	☐	☐
7. Does the teacher speak and write in standard English?	☐	☐	☐

8. Is most of the class day spent on basic skills such as reading, mathematics, writing, grammar and spelling?	☐	☐	☐
9. Are students tested frequently and moved to the next book or grade only if they have mastered the material?	☐	☐	☐

In the halls

	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely
1. Are these areas quiet and free of unsupervised children when class is in session?	☐	☐	☐
2. Do students appear respectful of each other and adults?	☐	☐	☐

The principal

	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely
1. Is he or she seen outside of the office supervising teaching and setting the tone of the school?	☐	☐	☐
2. Does the principal demand that teachers move students ahead a full grade each academic year?	☐	☐	☐

Relationship with parents

	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely
1. Do the principal and teachers make parents feel welcome, treating them as co-educators of the children?	☐	☐	☐
2. Do teachers routinely call or write to tell of a child's successes or failures, or invite a visit?	☐	☐	☐
3. Do teachers routinely send home a child's papers to be checked, signed and returned?	☐	☐	☐

Rating yourself as a parent

	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely
1. Do you ask your child each day what he or she did in school? And push beyond answers like "nothing new"?	☐	☐	☐
2. Do you examine returned schoolwork to monitor progress and problem areas?	☐	☐	☐
3. Do you speak to teachers three or four times a year about your child's work, seeking advice or supplementary material in subjects where the child is performing poorly or showing unusual aptitude or interest?	☐	☐	☐
4. Do you support the school's legitimate discipline of your child and the academic demands placed on him or her?	☐	☐	☐
5. Do you provide your child a quiet time and place for homework and reading where distractions from TV or radios are forbidden?	☐	☐	☐

Ask to see the school's test scores and charts showing on what grade levels students are reading. Are they at or above national norms? If not, has there been recent improvement? If not, what is being done to seek improvement?

As you conclude your visit, tell the principal what you saw. Ask for explanations of practices you consider questionable. Remember that you only saw a small slice of the educational process on one particular day.

If you feel strongly about the school, the most effective way to have your say is to meet with others who share your views. Together, seek a meeting first with the principal, then the superintendent, if necessary. If you remain dissatisfied, take it to the School Board at its monthly meeting.

Schools don't become effective by accident. They succeed only when someone — a superintendent, a principal, or a group of parents — is willing to demand excellence.

Charleston Daily Mail

Charleston, West Virginia

May 3, 1981

First in a Series

Inclusive gifted program still faces problems

West Virginia's brightest students are supposed to have a special school program aimed at developing their high academic potential. Although the Legislature has told schools to supply that extra education, some have ignored the order. The successes and failures of the state's program for intellectually gifted students are explored in this first article of a 10-part series which will continue Monday in the Daily Mail.

By Elizabeth Older

West Virginia was one of the first states in the nation to say that intellectually gifted students deserve a special school program.

In 1969, the Legislature passed a law requiring schools to provide all exceptional children — from mentally handicapped to gifted — with an individual study plan.

In 1974, the state Department of Education defined gifted students as individuals with "exceptional intellectual abilities significantly beyond the level of the average individual."

To get into a program, a student must score two or more standard deviations above average on an individual intelligence test. That's an IQ of 130 or 132, depending on which test is used. The "average" IQ is 100.

"No one has made a greater commitment to identify and serve gifted students than has the state of West Virginia," said Barbara Jones, state Department of Education coordinator for gifted services.

"The best thing about West Virginia's program is the comprehensiveness of the effort," she said. "First, we had the Legislature to support us. The processes in place were passed by the Board of Education. And the money to do it has been provided by the state through the school aid formula."

But many things have kept counties from getting gifted programs off the ground.

A federal call for education for the handicapped in 1975 preoccupied local administrators who knew they had to comply or face court suits. Gifted students were not covered in the federal law, so those programs were shoved aside.

State colleges and universities had no programs to train teachers. West Virginia University still doesn't have one. That has forced teachers in the northern counties to drive many miles to get those courses at other schools.

And despite a national surge in gifted education in the 1950s, the field still is in its infancy. Teachers were left to design their own materials and programs, often without any knowledge of what gifted education is all about.

At the beginning of the 1980-81 school year, 51 of West Virginia's 55 counties had students in gifted programs. They numbered 4,410, or a little more than 1 percent of the school population.

ELIZABETH OLDER

Elizabeth Older has been the education reporter and feature writer for the *Charleston Daily Mail* since 1979. She joined the staff after earning a Master's degree in journalism from the University of Missouri.

In her Fellowship study, Older sought to assess why only one percent of West Virginia's students had been identified as gifted while research indicates that up to five percent of any student population probably would fall into the gifted category.

Though the state legislature recognized the need to establish education programs for gifted students by appropriating funds for such programs, it was apparent that some schools ignored the mandate and others failed to develop sound criteria for evaluation. Further complicating the matter was the fact that many students from rural areas, such as Appalachia, simply hadn't acquired the test-taking skills needed to prove how bright they actually were.

In researching which gifted programs were effective, Older visited diversified programs throughout the state that included instruction by itinerant teachers, periodic placement in special centers, and self-contained classrooms.

Older found many inconsistencies in the identification of gifted students. She also learned that state colleges and universities had no programs to train teachers in this area, and uncovered examples of discrimination against gifted students particularly among the poor, females, and members of minority groups.

Inclusive gifted program still faces problems

But no systematic evaluation of those programs has been done. Many don't offer services to students in all grades, even though the state law mandates programs for individuals from 5 to 23.

And critics argue that the tests used to choose students discriminate against poor and minority youngsters.

Even with those trouble spots, the state still is in an elite group of about 17 states which require some kind of special education for gifted youngsters.

And county school systems receive three times the normal amount of state money for each gifted student they have enrolled, a formula followed for all exceptional children.

"In my opinion, the West Virginia program is very good," said John A. Grossi, gifted specialist with the Council for Exceptional Children in Reston, Va. "The state has a strong legislative mandate. It's very similar to the federal mandate for handicapped children."

For its size, West Virginia commits a generous amount of money to gifted education, Grossi said. Nationwide, states funneled almost $118 million into gifted education this school year. That's about seven times the amount allotted by the states 10 years ago.

The federal government added nearly $13 million — about $4.7 million through the Office for the Gifted and Talented and the rest in grants for innovative local programs. West Virginia's share of federal funds was about $182,000.

"But, I think because West Virginia is a very rural state, perhaps services to children are not as consistent as they should be," Grossi added.

"My feeling at this point is that we do not have enough programs," said Lowell Johnson, president of the West Virginia Education Association. "And there simply aren't enough certified people to teach in that area."

Johnson said he supports special programs for the gifted.

"We're concerned about what's being done for the handicapped, what's being done for the gifted and what's being done for those who are average," he added.

Roger Elser is the former state special education director who worked to get gifted education included in the state law governing exceptional children. But those programs lost steam after the 1975 federal handicapped legislation, he said.

"We got a lot of pats on the back in the early stages," Elser said from his Somerville, Tenn., home. "I guess we were kind of whistling in the dark."

Program statistics show that many of West Virginia's gifted children are being overlooked by the schools. Only about 1 percent of the state's 383,000 schoolchildren have been identified as gifted.

"You would expect that 2 percent to 5 percent of any population would qualify as gifted, regardless of race, ethnic background or the level of economic support the family enjoys," said Mrs. Jones. "In West Virginia, you don't find that to be true."

Mrs. Jones said the state is lagging because only the intellectually gifted, not the artistically gifted and others, are part of the program. And, she said, minority and poor children are not adequately represented because they don't have the word skills needed to qualify.

About 2.5 million of the nation's school-age population are considered gifted and talented. But only about 35 percent of those are in special programs.

"When you start a program in gifted education, you're starting from scratch," said state school Superintendent Roy Truby. "In a sense, West Virginia is plowing new ground."

The superintendent defends spending extra money on students who are at the top of the academic scale.

"I think the basic philosophy is that equal education opportunities are dependent on unequal expenditures," he said. "That's sometimes a hard concept for people to grasp. It's easier to comprehend when you're talking about an equal opportunity for a handicapped child."

How Many Students Are Being Served*

Total In Program In 1980:
4,410

Percentage Of School Population:
1.2%

Percentage of Special Ed
Population: 11.3%

	% In Gifted Program	% In School Population
Minorities	2.4	4.3
Males	53.6	51.6
Females	46.4	48.4
Low-Income	Unavailable	40.0

*Based on most recent figures supplied by the State Department of Education

But gifted children also require special treatment if they are to get the education promised by law, he said.

"They need to be challenged," Truby explained. "Sometimes it takes more to challenge them, to keep them interested."

Truby said he sees the need to find out how well West Virginia is doing that job.

"When we started, I think we needed a few years for various approaches to develop," the superintendent said. "We're at the point where we can start making an evaluation as to whether what we're doing is worth additional money."

Mrs. Jones said that evaluation isn't easy. Basic skills programs can use gains in test scores to gauge success. But most gifted students are already scoring at the top of standardized tests.

"If you've got a kid who is performing at the 99th percentile, how do you measure whether a program is working?" she asked. "You might not see the results until 10 years down the line."

The state will revise standards for gifted education next year. That could bring changes in how gifted students are chosen, schooled and graded.

"If a change is made, it will probably be to include students in specific academic areas," said Mrs. Jones. The program now excludes high-achievers in math and other single subjects if they do not meet the IQ requirement.

But Mrs. Jones thinks West Virginia will continue to give special education to the students who will become some of tomorrow's most productive citizens.

"At this point," she said, "I have no cause for alarm."

Second in a Series

May 4, 1981

Some Students Rebel Against Gifted Label

By ELIZABETH OLDER
Of The Daily Mail Staff

They're not all bookish.

Gifted students often are the cheerleaders, the senior class presidents, the ones who get picked to lead teams on the playground.

But for some youngsters, being tagged as "gifted" makes life a little miserable.

"I never tell anybody," said Christy Shanholtzer, a Cabell County fourth-grader. "It embarrasses me, I guess. I feel like I'm bragging."

Doddridge County eighth-grader Robin Davis remembers what she did to keep her friends from finding out she was attending gifted classes.

"I'd lie and say I was going to the doctor for fear they wouldn't accept it," she said. "I think you have to develop a special skill to get people to accept you. I wasn't ashamed of being here. It was really a big thing in my life to ever get accepted."

Twelve-year-old Jay Robinson finds himself fighting with classmates who compete with him unsuccessfully in the classroom.

"I go to a small school now," said the Doddridge sixth-grader. "All the kids are on one side or the other. Only a few are on my side."

Many students give up gifted classes because of such circumstances. In the adolescent years, especially, they want to belong and not be different from their peers.

But it isn't just fellow students who cause problems for gifted students. Parents sometimes push them into the special programs.

Cabell gifted specialist William Smith said he's seen students' grades drop drastically when they enter the seventh grade as they rebel against being labeled gifted.

"Then, sometimes, parents will insist they just want their child to be average. That's a sad comment isn't it? . . . not for the parents but for society," said state gifted coordinator Barbara Jones. "Sometimes, it's an overwhelming responsibility."

And teachers often react to gifted students in unexpected ways.

"Some of the teachers think the gifted program is good as long as I'm never out of their class," said Mercer County seventh-grader Toni Hartley. "A lot of people don't like it. They think it's unfair that we're getting out of class. What they don't understand is that we have to make up all that work without instruction. I've learned to explain it to them."

Those attitudes cause problems for the gifted instructor.

"If a regular teacher comes to you, you've got it made," said Diane Chandler, who teaches gifted students at Cabell's Beverly Hills Junior High. "Very few of them come to me. If I go to them, it's almost insulting."

"We're taking all their good students," Smith explained.

In most West Virginia counties, gifted students are pulled out of regular classes periodically to do special activities aimed at opening up their above-average academic potential. Educators across the state come up with an almost identical list of problems brought on as a result.

"There are problems with kids missing regular classwork," said Marian Alston, president of the Kanawha Teachers Association. "Parents don't like it when a kid misses regular classwork. Most teachers would prefer that the programs be delivered in a different manner."

The situation becomes more complicated if a student is not making good grades in the class missed for gifted instruction.

"A lot of people have a misconception that when you identify a gifted child, that child can catch on to all things at all times," Ms. Alston said.

Doddridge County Education Association President Richard McMillan says that misconception causes problems.

"Teachers tend to expect more from them, and sometimes they don't produce any better, sometimes not as well," he said.

Despite all those explanations, program backers say some teachers simply have it in for gifted students.

"I don't know how many times I've heard regular teachers say, 'You're gifted, you should be able to get this,' or 'Everybody here is gifted'," said Ann Pauley, gifted instructor in Mercer County. "Some of the teachers are threatened by these kids . . . and the students reflect the teacher's attitude."

The gifted students seem stuck in a system which says they should have special courses, and then penalizes them for doing something out of the ordinary.

Many students drop out of the program because of homework overload. Teachers require them to make up every page of work they missed to attend

How To Spot A Gifted Child

Gifted children usually learn easier and earlier than other youngsters their age. The Council for Exceptional Children in Reston, Va., supplies this list of general characteristics for parents and teachers to look for in a gifted child. Many school systems also have checklists which parents can request.

- **Gifted children learn to read early, often before they go to school. They may learn to read on their own and understand language very well.**
- **They usually have large vocabularies for their age.**
- **They learn basic skills more quickly and need less practice.**
- **They think imaginatively.**
- **Their concentration and attention spans are longer.**
- **They may have a wide variety of interests and will experiment.**
- **They have a great deal of curiosity and are always asking questions.**
- **They are good guessers.**
- **They can fit things together when a relationship is not obvious.**
- **They remember a lot of information.**
- **They usually get along well with children their age and with adults, although they may prefer the company of older people.**
- **They work well alone for long periods.**
- **They can read nonverbal messages while other children need to be told in words.**
- **They have a lot of energy.**

GIFTED STUDENTS

gifted classes. That may happen even if the student mastered the homework task long ago.

"It's almost a resentment they have toward them sometimes," said Mrs. Jones. "I don't know where that comes from."

Cabell County parent Candy Springer said the teachers at her school are supportive of the program, but she added, "I have heard of schools where the gifted students are literally ridiculed."

Some people suggest that the gifted child's brilliance makes teachers feel inadequate. Others say some teachers resent special gifted classes.

"It's an ego thing," Smith explained. "They say 'How can you teach that child better than I can,' or 'You say this child is gifted, but he's not making straight A's in my class.' "

But Louise Stoutamyer, gifted coordinator in Wyoming County, says a teacher's "sense of fairness" to the other students is offended when the gifted get special attention.

"I think what people don't realize is that these children have always been in the classroom," she said. "We didn't just invent them."

Ms. Alston said classroom teachers sometimes think the gifted programs are unnecessary.

"Most of the time, the regular classroom teachers who are working with gifted students are trying to meet their special needs," she said. "Sometimes that special program is needed, and sometimes it isn't."

Cabell student Mike Gothard sees the program as a "luxury."

"I feel guilty. I really feel guilty," said the senior. "I see kids around me who work harder than I do and sometimes get better grades . . . I just think all students should be given a chance to do what we're doing."

Despite their brilliance, gifted youngsters can create trouble in school.

"Some of the kids get into trouble because they question you, they question me, they question their parents," Mrs. Jones explained. "School systems just are not built to handle that."

That trait — curiosity — can put gifted students in a perilous position.

"There are often personality clashes," Mrs. Pauley said. "As they grow older, they want more out of life. Their expectations of the teachers are really high."

Monroe County educators are trying to teach gifted students to cope with those high expectations in a special program set up with a federal grant.

"We realized that sometimes our gifted children just have trouble getting along with other children. They feel that other children don't accept them," said A.W. Crotty Jr., one of the county's gifted instructors.

He said the students can be impatient and "dictatorial" because their classmates don't catch on to things quickly.

"This program really has to do with behavior, with getting them to get along with each other and their abilities and beliefs," said Crotty.

Successful schooling is perhaps in even greater danger among the underachieving gifted — the ones who don't do their work in spite of their superior abilities. They frustrate and irritate educators, and are often skipped over by teachers who recommend students to be tested for the gifted program.

"You're always struck with their potential," said Mrs. Jones. "So often, you see them in the classroom and they're not responding. They're an enigma."

Since sensitivity is a well-developed trait in most gifted youngsters, they often are keenly aware of what other people expect of them, she said.

"They have a strong sense of responsibility," said Mrs. Jones.

"The kids we're talking about respond to a truly individualized program . . . That should not be their total program. Can you imagine how boring it would be if you did everything by yourself?" she asked.

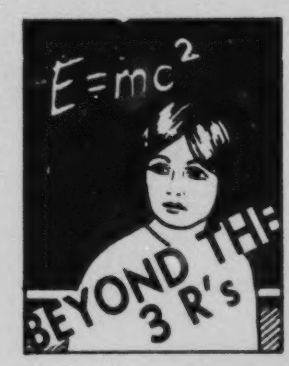
Research has shown that gifted students in special academic programs progress more rapidly than do those who lack that extra education.

With their shrewd intellectual perception, they often appear wise beyond their years.

"For many of these kids, I think there's a developmental lag emotionally," said Mrs. Jones. "You have a gifted kid who is 9 years old. It's easy to expect him to behave on a level commensurate with his vocabulary."

But academic skill doesn't alter the basic needs of that child, she said.

"These students need to be valued," she said. "They need to be important to somebody."



Third in a Series

May 5, 1981

Mercer County Fights Isolation By Busing Rural Gifted Students

By ELIZABETH OLDER
Of The Daily Mail Staff

E=mc²
BEYOND THE 3 R's

PRINCETON — Gifted students in small, rural schools sometimes feel isolated, trapped in a classroom where no one else learns the same way they do.

To fight that isolation, Mercer is busing 25 out-of-town students to the county vocational center where they learn to use computers, type letters and weld seams — together.

"These kids come from schools which have few gifted students and no library equipment," explained teacher Pam Burton. "The schools are 20 or 30 minutes apart. We just wanted to see if we could cut down on transportion and better serve the students."

In the rural areas of Mercer County, teachers use up hours and gallons of gas traveling from school to school to meet with gifted students. They hold classes in storage rooms, under stairwells, just about anywhere a small space can accommodate the group. State guidelines suggest this method — called itinerant teaching — as one way of providing gifted education.

But the gifted class at the Mercer County Vocational-Technical Center avoids itinerant program pitfalls. There, a room is set aside for students from 10 out-of-town elementary schools. They travel on the regularly scheduled high-school buses to the center for one afternoon session each week. The program was started last October with a $9,000 federal vocational education grant and about $3,000 in county funds.

"They've been studying under a teacher in electronics," said Mrs. Burton. "They've been next door working with computers." And the eager learners have had lessons from botanists, architects and other center staff members.

It's strictly a "hands-on" approach to education meant to open up career avenues and self-awareness, the teacher explained. Mrs. Burton calls the class activities "as real to life as possible."

Gifted students who attend small schools often find themselves isolated from their intellectual peers. In itinerant programs, special education teachers visit gifted students for a little while each week, then leave them to cope with classwork they've already mastered.

"Very often these children have never been challenged," said Mrs. Burton.

But the students enthusiastically attack typing lessons and other subjects under Mrs. Burton's kind and controlling hand.

"You get to do things up here that you don't get to do in elementary school, like chemistry," said Oakvale fifth-grader Joel Stauffer.

The words "sad and mad" were used by the students to describe how they would feel if the program ever ended. In reality, center officials don't know if they'll have room for the elementary students next year.

That means Mrs. Burton may be back in her car, dragging a canvas bag full of teaching materials from school to school.

"Being an itinerant is just an unhappy circumstance," said state gifted coordinator Barbara Jones. The method works best with few students in a rural setting, she said.

"My prejudice, I suppose, would be toward a resource room," she said. Those classes are similar to Mercer's vocational center setup.

Ann Pauley hopes the success of that program will allay community concerns about busing all gifted students to classes at special centers. As lead teacher for Mercer's nine-member gifted education team, she sees the strain that the staff suffers traveling around the county to serve more than 200 youngsters.

"That's one reason we lose a lot of teachers," she explained. "They're foolish to stay with this program when they can go elsewhere and have their own room and not have to travel."

Mercer County Gifted Program

Grades Served: K-11

Number of Students: 230*
(2% of School Population)

Number of Teachers: 9*

Type of Program:
Itinerant/Resource

* Based on second-month statistics provided by the state Department of Education

Five instructors left last year, and several of the replacements have only college degrees and not teacher training. The long hours pushed three marriages over the edge, Mrs. Pauley said.

State School Superintendent Roy Truby said he thinks the 28 percent turnover rate for special-education teachers is caused in part by inadequate training.

"The people are being placed in jobs they are not equipped to handle," he said. "The children in this state are suffering because we don't have fully certified people."

Mrs. Pauley said pressure from parents and principals to get students in the program and see some success adds another headache for the instructors.

"Trying to meet everyone's demands is difficult," she said. "If you really do your job with the gifted child, you go home tired, mentally drained. But your brain is still searching for a new direction, something new to get them involved."

Despite its growing pains, the 5-year-old Mercer program is considered one of the best in the state. Pupil Services Director Diane Szakonyi, who put the program together, said the interest of parents and school administrators got the county working with gifted students ahead of other systems.

Mercer County Education Association President Effie Brown said regular teachers generally believe the gifted program is a good one. She conceded that some teachers don't like their students taken out of class to attend the special sessions, and she termed that an issue.

But changes are under way to ease that problem for secondary-school students who, until late this year, took time out of regular classes two hours each week to work in the gifted program.

"We had students who were missing algebra every week to go to the gifted class," Mrs. Pauley explained. "It was hurting their grades, which hurts their future because it involves college." Students were dropping out because the short sessions weren't worth the trouble they caused in other classes.

So the older students now are going to take two full days out of each six-week semester to study one topic in depth.

"They want more information about careers. They want more information about colleges," said Mrs. Pauley. "Many of these students who come from rural areas are unaware of the careers that are available."

Fourth in a Series

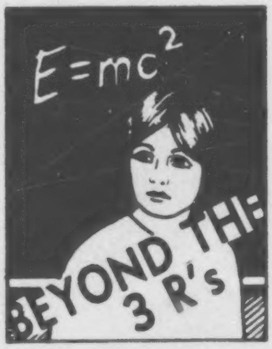
May 6, 1981

As Gifted Students Progress, They May Surpass Teachers

By ELIZABETH OLDER
Of The Daily Mail Staff

HUNTINGTON — Gifted students often are smarter than their teachers.

"We're buying computers, but not one of our teachers knows enough about computers to run them," said William Smith, specialist for gifted education in Cabell County. "These students are far ahead of us."



As gifted students grow older, they may outdistance the public school system. Acceleration — moving students through classes as quickly as they master the subjects — is not common in West Virginia.

The new state graduation standards say that a student must complete 20 credits in grades nine through 12. That means the Cabell County seventh-grader who took biology last summer at Marshall University may not get to count the course toward his diploma.

"We're going to test the state system on this," said Smith. "Will he have to take biology again to get credit?"

State gifted coordinator Barbara Jones said gifted students may be able to get credit for courses taken early under the new guidelines. Those rules go into effect this fall for the 1985 graduating class.

"In this case we're penalizing kids because they have done, early on, everything we asked them to do," said Mrs. Jones. "School systems are not really geared to these kinds of students ... But the whole question of acceleration is a very complex one. There are many things to consider — the social maturity, the emotional maturity, the importance or lack of importance of athletics."

For a small group of gifted students in Cabell, acceleration has been the answer in a pilot program called "Project Produce."

The eight juniors and seniors take courses at Marshall during the afternoons. For that work, they receive both high school and college credit. They also meet twice a week with Edwina Pendarvis, gifted instructor at the university.

"We hope to extend the program to freshmen and sophomores," said Ms. Pendarvis, who has volunteered her time to the program this semester.

"Everybody always complains that acceleration is not enough," she said. "This program accelerates and provides those enrichment kinds of things that we associate with gifted kids."

CHRISTY SHANNOLTZER AND CHAD WILCOX AT GALLAHER CENTER WITH TEACHER CAROL ALLEY

Daily Mail Photo by Bob Gay

The students say they have no trouble fitting in on campus.

"I think students could start this at a younger age," said Laura Muth, a senior at Huntington East. "I would rather have gone straight from junior high school into college."

Ms. Pendarvis added that the students didn't make all A's in their college courses last semester.

"But I think they still have it too easy," she said. "They could do much harder work. I think they put in the effort needed to make a decent grade."

Through the eighth grade, participants in Cabell's gifted program spend some time each week in "enrichment" activities. They do in-depth study, put together intricate projects and think through complicated issues not commonly considered in the classroom.

Starting in the ninth grade, the students are supposed to sign up for one class — usually English — with a gifted instructor.

"One of the things we're doing in the junior high schools is working with the good teachers and channeling the gifted students into those classes," said Smith. "We're finding out which ones are receptive to the gifted.

"Scheduling becomes a big problem in junior high," Smith added. The secondary school principal sets up his schedule "the way he sees fits," Smith explained.

As a result, students may have to choose between gifted classes and regular courses scheduled in the same time slot. And extracurricular activities such as chorus and band also compete. The gifted adolescents aren't eager to look different from their friends.

Diane Chandler, gifted teacher at Beverly Hills Junior High, gets frustrated by her "non-academic," role, helping students pick out classes and piece together a day of worthwhile studies.

Cabell County Associate Superintendent Robert Griffis thinks the state funding regulations force older gifted students into inappropriate classes.

"The funding at the county level is tied to special education rules and regulations. To get money for teachers' salaries, you must have a certified gifted teacher working with those students," he said.

Griffis said that means a brilliant math student may end up with a gifted teacher whose subject specialty is English. He thinks the money for gifted programs should go to support advanced courses, small classes and on-the-job experiences. The gifted instructor should simply be an adviser, he said.

Mrs. Jones said the state regulations are an "insurance policy" for good programs.

"If there were not some inducement for certification, who would get certified?" she asked.

Gifted teacher Carol Alley will complete her certification requirements this year. She runs one of Cabell's five elementary level "resource rooms," where students from 32 schools come for special classes one day each week.

Cabell County Gifted Program

Grades Served: Kindergarten-12

Number of Students: 517*
(2.8% of School Population)

Number of Teachers: 17*

Type of Program:
Resource/Accelerated Classes

* Based on second-month statistics provided by the state Department of Education

Mrs. Alley says she wants to give her students a "taste" of lots of knowledge at the Gallaher Elementary center, plant thoughts they'll build upon in later years.

The purpose of the program is not lost on the participants.

"It's just really fun here," said Chad Wilcox, a fourth-grader at Geneva Kent. "There's exciting stuff to do. This is better because you get to use more brains. You have to try harder."

Gifted students present a special challenge, said the teacher.

"They need a framework, but they also need freedom," said Mrs. Alley. "In here, they can think in far-out ways. I think they feel more freedom in this room than they do in the regular classroom."

Cabell County Education Association President Fran Westbrook said the elementary program is working well now that the resource rooms are open. Before this year, instructors traveled from school to school to meet with gifted program participants.

"It keeps their enthusiasm for school up because it challenges them," said the Park Hills Elementary teacher. "They don't get bored or turned off."

Candy Springer said the secondary program hasn't pleased some parents in the Cabell County Association for the Gifted and Talented. But she said her son is thrilled with the new elementary school resource rooms.

"He said he would like to have it five days a week," said Mrs. Springer, who serves as president of the parents' group.

Smith said he hopes schools will begin to offer more advanced classes earlier so the secondary program can be improved.

'I find these students we're working with are learning better in the regular classroom," he said. "They're learning to budget their time. We're finding that we can ask these students to do more . . . They feel they're learning more. I feel they are. The parents are satisfied."

Nomads, Resource Rooms Two Ways To Help Gifted

By ELIZABETH OLDER
Of The Daily Mail Staff

State guidelines suggest two ways to provide special services for gifted children — through resource rooms and itinerant teaching.

With the resource room approach, gifted students come together at a specific place to study each week. Class activities usually are geared toward "enrichment," offering the children an in-depth look at subjects which interest them. Some acceleration — moving students into advanced study as quickly as they master their lessons — is done.

In many school systems, teachers travel from school to school to hold classes with gifted students. This is called itinerant teaching. The method is often used in rural areas with few students and in new programs. Class activities are the same as those in the resource rooms, but time may be more limited with itinerant programs.

With either teaching method, teachers may have students from more than one grade level in the gifted class. But state guidelines say that the age span among the youngsters must not exceed four years.

Parents and teachers usually refer students to be tested for the gifted program. Students may refer themselves or other students. Referrals from other people also are taken. To get into a gifted program, the student must have an IQ of 130 or 132, depending on which test is used. The "average" score is 100. Parents must give their permission before educators evaluate a child for the gifted program.

Under state Department of Education rules, gifted students are supposed to have a study plan geared to their specific abilities and educational needs. Those are called individualized education programs, or IEPs. Parents have the right to participate in writing the program. They also may approve or reject the final plan.

West Virginia is one of only a few states which require IEPs for gifted students. Other special education children, such as the handicapped, also study under those programs.

No grades are given in most gifted programs in the state. But a student's progress should be evaluated at least yearly, based on the goals outlined in the IEP.

Although state guidelines do not set a specific time limit for students to be in gifted activities, state coordinator Barbara Jones says school systems should try to provide one hour each week or one day each month. Many counties fall short of that recommendation.

Individuals from 5 to 23 are promised free special education under West Virginia law. Parents may request a due process hearing before a neutral party if they feel their child's needs are not being met. A free independent evaluation of a child's abilities may be provided under certain circumstances.

Parents also have the right to see their child's school records. Parents are advised by the state Education Department to keep a home file of a child's records.

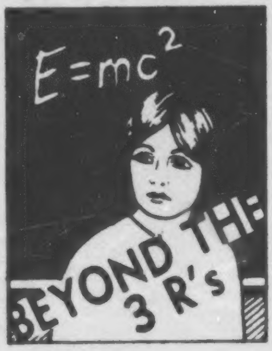
Fifth in a Series

May 7, 1981

WVU Lag Puts 'Gifted' Teachers Of Northern Counties In Squeeze

By ELIZABETH OLDER
Of The Daily Mail Staff

WEST UNION — Teachers in northern West Virginia have traveled incalculable miles, often in evenings after a full day's work, to take special classes in gifted education.



Doddridge teacher Nancy Droppleman describes it as being "caught in a squeeze."

In West Virginia, three institutions are responsible for making sure that classroom teachers can get the courses they need to meet state certification requirements. Those schools are Marshall University, the College of Graduate Studies and West Virginia University.

The institutions have split the state into three pieces. Each is supposed to offer classes in numerous locations in their region so teachers can get the credit hours needed to continue teaching.

But WVU, the school responsible for classes in Doddridge and 28 other northern counties, has failed to start a program in gifted education — in Morgantown or elsewhere.

"I was really resentful," recalled Mrs. Droppleman, who has worked with the Doddridge gifted program since it started in 1975. "I think we all were. I couldn't believe that the largest state university didn't have a program."

Both Marshall and COGS require 18 hours of classes at the master's level for full certification in gifted education. Teachers who are not certified — 56 now are employed in the state — must agree to complete six hours of coursework each year.

Mrs. Droppleman never has calculated how much money or time she spent driving to Charleston, Summersville, New Martinsville and other towns to get courses through another school's program.

"The money doesn't matter," she said.

The thing that bothered her was being caught in the middle, with the state saying she needed the training and WVU saying the program wasn't ready.

"Many of us would never have gotten into this had we known the program would be set up like it is," she said.

Wilfred Wienke, WVU's chairman for special education, said the school's gifted program took three years to go through about 13 campus committees. He thinks it will be approved by the Board of Regents and the state Department of Education by late summer.

"I don't think the university was dragging its heels," he said. "I think there's a concern for quality."

State gifted coordinator Barbara Jones said she understands that WVU is a "large, complex university." But she pointed out that the law requiring gifted programs in public schools was passed in 1969 and went into effect in 1974.

"I think they could have anticipated [the need]," she said. "One would hope the state university would take a leadership role."

Wienke and Mrs. Jones agree that teacher training is the state's biggest problem in gifted education.

"If you don't have teachers who are trained to deal with gifted students, what's going to happen in that classroom probably won't be any different from what's going on in the regular classes," Mrs. Jones explained.

If that problem was solved in Doddridge, few others would exist for this sparsely populated rural community. The teachers travel miles to meet with gifted students, but they feel the county's smallness gives the program a personal touch.

Mrs. Droppleman and her teaching partner, Darlene Seckman, meet with their students for an hour once or twice each week. In addition, seminars which focus on the interests of particular groups are held from time to time at a central location. Those sessions run one day a week for about a month.

"I think this rounds out their education," Mrs. Droppleman said. "Many of these children are in a double-class situation. They might read all day if it wasn't for this."

All but one of the elementary schools in Doddridge run through the eighth grade and have more than one grade to a room.

"That's why we really don't have any trouble with other teachers. They're usually happy for their students to get this," said Mrs. Droppleman.

The gifted students' schedules change from week to week, depending on the demands of their regular classes. But the teachers see that "give and take" as an asset.

And because the school population is so small, Mrs. Droppleman can check the standardized test scores of every student to locate potential candidates for the gifted program.

"Sometimes the teacher referrals are not so good," the teacher explained.

Research has shown that classroom teachers often will pass over gifted children when they're asked to pick them out of a group. The teachers tend to choose the students who present themselves well in class, not the curious, questioning gifted individuals.

"I think one of the positive things about rural systems is that you can put things into a personal perspective, whereas in larger counties you're dealing with numbers," said Richard Oyler, the county's special education director.

"I feel we are doing a good job, even though we do have limited resources," he said. "And we do talk to parents."

The gifted program seems to be "well accepted" by everyone, Oyler added.

The teachers use resources outside the program to get their gifted students involved. They participate in academic fairs, visit museums and join in science class star-gazing parties. School psychologist David Leda recently was called in to teach the students how to shape the behavior of a white mouse.

But they term the working conditions for traveling teachers "unbearable." At Summers Elementary — a two-room school about 30 minutes outside of West Union — Miss Seckman taught two students in a large, wood-floored room shared with a reading teacher who was testing two other students. A radio played in the kitchen next door.

"We're just used to it, I guess," Miss Seckman said. "I don't know if it bothers the kids. I think they've adjusted to it." The county now is adding rooms at the elementary schools to provide space for traveling teachers.

After the eighth grade, Doddridge's gifted students have no special program.

"We work with them on their schedules," Mrs. Droppleman explained. "But we just don't have the ability to offer the kind of advanced courses — especially science courses — that our students need. We're just too small."

Doddridge County Education Association President Richard McMillan said he thinks a high school program "probably would help. It couldn't hurt, I'm sure." He has a son in the elementary school program.

The Doddridge High agriculture teacher said most people generally approve of the gifted program. But he added that most community members don't know much about it.

Mrs. Droppleman sees the program as one way of convincing rural students that they're capable of going places they've never dreamed of.

"Most of the students would like to be in the program," she said. "It's not so much that they want to be known as gifted. They just want the experiences. You know by their eyes that they really want to be here."

Doddridge County Gifted Program

Grades Served: 3-8

Number of Students: 20*
(1.2% of School Population)

Number of Teachers: 2*

Type of Program:
Itinerant

* Based on second-month statistics provided by the state Department of Education

*Teachers In State Gifted Program**

Number Employed: 192.5
(6.4% of all Special Ed Teachers)

Number Fully Certified: 136.5

Number of Positions Unfilled:
12

Percent Who Quit Each Year:
26
(All Special Ed)

* Based on most recent figures supplied by the state Department of Education

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Sixth in a Series

May 8, 1981

Gifted Students Stir Frustration When They Are Underachievers

By ELIZABETH OLDER
Of The Daily Mail Staff

Gifted students don't always make good grades.

About 10 at one Kanawha County high school had semester marks this year below C — the grade that indicates average achievement.

E=mc²
BEYOND THE
3 R'S

Thirteen out of 47 didn't make the B-honor roll.

They're called underachievers, and they're a frustration to parents and teachers everywhere.

"There is no one explanation. There are many explanations," said Connie Strickland, one of two full-time teachers who work with gifted students in grades 10 through 12 in Kanawha. "It can be personal problems. It can be home problems. It can be a total lack of motivation for various reasons."

The underachievers usually lose interest in school around the fourth grade, she said. They become bored with the drill and review on lessons learned the first time through.

"They want to learn by doing, by questioning, by experimenting," said Mrs. Strickland.

To bring back that enthusiasm for learning, Mrs. Strickland is conducting self-awareness seminars with gifted students. A small group at George Washington High School volunteered for an eight-week pilot program this year. They've talked about how teachers annoy them, how they annoy teachers and similar subjects. School psychologist Joann Daley worked with them.

"One of the first things they asked is 'Are you sure I'm gifted?' " explained Mrs. Strickland. "They question whether they can do it or not . . . This has made them aware of their potential and whether or not they are using their potential."

Teachers say the program has helped the underachievers, not in grades as much as attitude, she added.

"I particularly emphasize with the teachers that gifted kids have learning problems, too," said Mrs. Strickland. "But research points out that if you really want to help the underachieving gifted child, you have to work with the child, the parents and the teachers."

For some students, it may be too late.

LISA AUSTIN LOOKS AT NASA BROCHURES WITH CONNIE STRICKLAND OF GW HIGH SCHOOL

Daily Mail Photo by Craig Cunningham

The parent of a gifted child who dropped out of school this year had this to say: "I guess, deep down, I wasn't totally surprised . . . I can't really say that the school system is all wrong. It does a lot of things for a lot of people. I just feel that there should be some exceptions made to keep them in school."

She said her child is quiet, not interested in English and other standard subjects.

"There are a lot of things in school that are wrong," said the mother, who asked not to be identified. "I know that some teachers are good quality teachers. There are some others who are really well educated in their field, but they can't come across to the students."

Her child plans to earn a high school equivalent diploma and go into a technical field.

"I'm just wondering," said the mother. "I don't know when a kid gets turned off."

Teacher Priscilla Ahlgren doubts that gifted education alone, without intensive counseling, can convince these students to use their talents.

"They've established a pattern of failure. They don't see themselves as accomplishing a lot. They have a negative self-image," she said.

Educators estimate that 15 to 20 percent of the nation's dropouts could qualify as gifted. About 10 percent of the gifted group make average or below-average grades in school, while about half never really live up to their academic potential.

The Kanawha teachers know they lose a few students who drop out, but the county's high school program has flourished since it started three years ago. It's grown from about 17 students to 200.

Other school systems have tried to find some way to serve high school students without interrupting their regular classes. The three-part Kanawha program works around that problem with seminars on school time one day each month, and on-the-job experience and college courses after hours or in the summer.

"College classes are the component with the lowest level of particpation," said Mrs. Ahlgren. The students usually take those at local colleges during the summer. About 10 students are planning to attend national summer study programs this year, she said.

"There's the financial consideration," the teacher explained. "Of course, we can't help them with that."

The daylong seminars are conducted by volunteers on subjects suggested by students. Science fiction, the stock market and law have been topics. Students choose the seminars they want to attend.

The on-the-job training with professionals in the community — called mentorships — are done after school. Medicine, architecture and other occupations have caught the students' interest. The mentorships last for about six weeks, but a student may sign up for several throughout the school year.

George Washington student Lisa Austin said she learned that she doesn't fancy a career in environmental engineering after a mentorship in the field.

"What I'm interested in is trying to find solutions for environmental problems," said the 11th-grader. "I don't want to be in an office like that."

The Kanawha teachers believe the county setup has solved the difficult problem of challenging gifted students without competing with their regular classes and extracurricular activities.

Mrs. Strickland pointed out that most gifted students participate in the high school program, while many of the eligible junior high students have dropped out at that level. Frances Fuller, Kanawha special education coordinator, said the younger students seem to focus on school activities, regular coursework and fitting in with their friends.

Kanawha Teachers Association President Marian Alston said taking students out of regular classes, which is done more often in lower grades, has brought complaints from parents and students. But, overall, gifted education is well accepted, she said.

"A lot of the kids who already understand their talents are working it out real well in the regular classroom," she added.

Jonathan Kurland, president of the Kanawha Association for Gifted Children, said parents are concerned about the junior high school dropouts. But the high school program gets good marks since students don't have to miss class, he added.

State gifted coordinator Barbara Jones said mentorships, college courses and advanced classes offer good opportunities for older gifted students. But she questions whether classes required by law should be scheduled outside the normal school day.

"We know most of our kids are interested in getting good grades and achieving," said Mrs. Ahlgren. "They told us they did not want to be pulled out of school on a regular basis. So, we designed a program which is very flexible."

Kanawha County High School Gifted Program

Grades Served: 10-12

Number of Students: 200*
(2.2% of 10-12 Population)

Number of Teachers:
2 Full Time, 2 Part Time*

Type of Program:
Advanced Classes
Mentorships/Workshops

* Based on statistics provided by Kanawha County school officials

Declining Enrollment Threatens Advanced Programs In Schools

By ELIZABETH OLDER
Of The Daily Mail Staff

Advanced courses which challenge the better students in school are being dropped from public education programs as enrollment declines.

The state lost almost 4,000 students from 1979 to 1980, continuing a downward trend that's common across the country. But state officials believe that slide will level off in the next few years.

As classes get smaller, schools can't afford to keep operating courses like physics, trigonometry and others which attract a few topnotch students.

And in rural areas, where the school group always has been small, such courses often are unavailable.

"Declining enrollment is going to continue to be a problem for us," said state gifted coordinator Barbara Jones.

Teaching staffs are being trimmed to cut costs, she said. With that, advanced courses — called electives since they are not part of the required school program — also are going down the drain.

But State School Superintendent Roy Truby thinks the new state graduation guidelines will work for those classes. The rules, which require students to earn 20 credits in grades nine through 12, go into effect this fall for the class of 1985. The old regulations required only 17 credits.

"I think the changes in graduation requirements, especially the attendance requirement in the senior year, will cause more of those students to take advantage of the curriculum available to them," Truby said.

Some large high schools in the state still are able to offer an impressive array of classes for students interested in an academic challenge. At St. Albans High, the program of studies includes Latin, math analysis, zoology and composition for the college-bound. With more than 1,000 students, St. Albans is the largest high school in the county.

"About 50 percent of our kids are college-bound students. More and more of the college-bound are attracted to math and science," said Vice Principal Rebecca Goodwin. More girls also are moving into those fields, she added.

"Because of the size of our school and the size of our faculty, we can offer these advanced courses," Mrs. Goodwin explained.

Many St. Albans students earn college credit through advanced placement tests in the College-Level Examination Program.

"We feel like our advanced classes and our upper-level classes meet the students' needs," said Mrs. Goodwin. The courses are open to all students, not just those in the gifted program, she explained. Counselors advise students on which courses best suit their future plans.

About 86 percent of the students at George Washington High go on to college, said Principal Paul Callahan. The school is the only one in the county participating in the Advanced Placement Program, which allows students to earn college credit through courses taught in high school. For a $38 fee, students take a test to prove they know the work. Credit earned on that test is accepted by many colleges and universities throughout the nation.

About 20 percent of the nation's 22,000 secondary schools offer AP courses. The College Board, which runs the program, reported that 12 West Virginia schools participated in 1979.

"Many of our students go on to school and start their college careers as second-semester freshmen," said Callahan. "Since so many of our kids go on to college, we feel it's very important that they have every opportunity to take classes that will enable them to be competitive wherever they go across the country."

About 55 students are in the three AP courses offered this semester at George Washington, Callahan said. Not all of those are in the gifted program, he added.

But the principal fears that advanced classes might have to be sacrificed as enrollment drops.

"I'm really worried about it," Callahan said. "This year, we're losing five teachers. It's really going to put a cramp on our curriculum."

The AP course enrollment ended up at an acceptable level this year, with about 20 students in each class, he added.

"I think we'll be able to continue to offer the curriculum as long as the students are interested in it," Callahan said.

Seventh in a Series

May 9, 1981

Wyoming County Battles To Catch Up In Schooling Gifted

By ELIZABETH OLDER
Of The Daily Mail Staff

PINEVILLE — Some West Virginia school systems have ignored the state law which requires them to set up special programs for intellectually gifted students.

Up until last year, Wyoming County was one of them.

Four counties still had not identified any gifted students by late last fall, even though programs for such youngsters were supposed to start in 1974. Those counties are Grant, Logan, Marion and Marshall.

For Wyoming, the break came two years ago when the county got a $10,000 federal grant to set up three "magnet classrooms" which gifted students visit about five hours each week. That program has given school a new look for students like Tim Lupardus.

"I want to study things, just all different types of things around me," explained the 14-year-old, who already has completed two college algebra courses through Southern West Virginia Community College. "Not take classes. Just study the trees, the sky, the moon, the stars — as an observer, like Carl Sagan."

A math whiz, Lupardus describes school as a place where he's often gotten into trouble for talking. The eighth-grader is in Carol Gangwisch's class at the Pineville Middle School gifted center. Students there are engaged in various projects which tickle their interest — writing plays, tutoring younger students, making movies and staging a mock trial complete with local judge on the bench.

"You're always planning something to interest them," said Miss Gangwisch, a Pittsburgh native who is in her first year of teaching. "I'm really concerned about their self-pride in their work. I don't know whether they've never been challenged or if they just do enough to get by. It's like pulling teeth sometimes to get them to pick up a pencil."

Program coordinator Louise Stoutamyer thinks the local administration was ready to go ahead with gifted education, even without the federal money.

"It certainly made it easier" she said. "It's gone very smoothly."

The county tacked about $6,000 onto the $10,000 grant to outfit three gifted classrooms at Berlin McKinney Elementary, Mullens High and Pineville. Those centers serve 13 of the county's 25 schools.

"Our county decided to spend a year planning instead of just starting the program," explained Mrs. Stoutamyer, who spent 22 years in the classroom before taking the administrative position. "Right now, we're serving only the three largest towns — Pineville, Oceana and Mullens."

Program expansion depends in part upon whether the county gets a second federal grant this year. Mrs. Stoutamyer's proposal also requested third-year funding for materials, but the money is awarded separately for each school term. And federal budget cuts may endanger such funding for local school systems.

Parents in rural Wyoming County are getting anxious to get their children into a program.

"I would say the target population in this county is about 170," Mrs. Stoutamyer said.

But she wonders if schools in outlying areas will be able to spare a room to house the gifted centers. She also fears that students in rural areas may have trouble with the program's IQ entrance test.

Sandra Lucento, special services administrator, said the county was slow getting a gifted program started because "150 percent" of the time was spent meeting federal schooling requirements for handicapped students.

"We weren't trained in this area, really. We were unaware of the proper procedure for getting the program off the ground," she said. "There was more pressure to establish a program for the handicapped than there was for the gifted."

And certified teachers — required to get state funds for gifted education — were difficult to recruit to the rural coal-mining county, she added.

"So we started to look within the system to see what we could do with the people we had," Mrs. Lucento said. Those interested, like Mrs. Stoutamyer,

Wyoming County Gifted Program

Grades Served:
Kindergarten-12

Number of Students: 48*
(.06% of School Population)

Number of Teachers: 3*

Type of Program:
Resource

Areas Served:
Pineville, Oceana, Mullens

* Based on second-month statistics provided by the state Department of Education

were retrained in gifted education.

State gifted coordinator Barbara Jones said those program roadblocks have been common to all counties. She said the state wants the local systems to make a "good faith effort" to comply with the law as soon as possible.

Mrs. Lucento said the federal money for Wyoming's gifted program helped ease local budget woes. And teachers had the chance to work with national experts in gifted education when the District I Regional Education Service Agency spent $16,000 to pay for that training program. The state has funded eight RESA districts to aid local school systems.

Interest in the gifted education is on the upswing in Wyoming now, Mrs. Lucento said.

"We find more pressure for the gifted program than there used to be," she explained. "The general public is more aware that the state of West Virginia has a law requiring that . . . It's the best public relations program we have. It's all positive. They're doing something for the bright kids."

But the administrator is quick to say that politics plays no part in choosing ty avoids pressure from parents to get their children into the program, Mrs. Lucento said.

Reading teacher Linda Lugar thinks those guidelines may be too strict, knocking out children who could benefit from the special education. In her view, high schoolers don't gain much from gifted classes if they have to give up other activities for that.

"I would recommend it for younger children," the Oceana Middle School teacher said. "I'm sure the gifted program will eventually be good. There has been so much money spent on the other side of the scale."

"Most of the people I've run into seem very pleased this is happening," Mrs. Stoutamyer concluded. "They say it's long overdue."

students for the gifted program. A special grand jury recently admonished Wyoming board members for their active role in Democratic Party politics.

By sticking strictly to state regulations in admitting youngsters, the coun-

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Eighth in a Series

May 10, 1981

Boone Has State's Only Gifted Program In Art, Drama

By ELIZABETH OLDER
Of The Daily Mail Staff

MADISON — Only one school system in West Virginia has developed a special school program for students who are talented in art and drama.

In Boone County, st[illegible] producing puppet shows, putting on plays and learning the difference between oils and acrylics in a gifted education program built around the visual and performing arts.

In 1978, the federal government issued new guidelines for gifted education. The regulations suggested special programs for students who excel in those areas.

But state school officials say special education for creative students is difficult to develop. They question how students would be selected for such programs and how counties struggling to serve the intellectually gifted could cope with the extra burden.

"They're not big risk-takers, that's my opinion of it," said Kathy Phillips, who teaches Boone students who are gifted in art.

"I think lots of the time, it's easier for them to say it's too hard to develop," she said. "They're expensive programs."

Mrs. Phillips has 25 students in grades one through 12 who spend a few hours each week learning how to translate their talents into works of art.

Teacher Beckie Gay works with 35 students in grades seven through 12 who are inclined toward showing their stuff on stage.

And the two work together with more than 100 other elementary-age youngsters in a federally funded program called Razz-Ma-Tazz, which started this year.

Mrs. Phillips describes it as an "opportunities class" to give disadvantaged students a chance to expand their creative talents enough to qualify for the regular program.

"If you're a kid and you've never had any experience in the arts, how are you going to know if you're interested or not?" asked Ms. Gay. "The idea is to work with these kids for a long period of time and then assess changes in performance so that the kids who are talented sort of pop up."

Mrs. Phillips hopes Razz-Ma-Tazz will uncover talented students who have not had the cultural exposure common in middle-class and upper-class families.

The program now serves the fourth, fifth and sixth grades in two schools — Comfort and Ramage. The teachers want to continue it next year at new schools, with or without the federal money.

After a year in Razz-Ma-Tazz, participants must meet the regular entrance requirements to continue in the art and drama gifted program.

Both teachers have developed checklists and tests to use in judging a student's creative gifts. They also use guidelines prepared by experts in the field.

In art, a 15-piece portfolio of original work is required. For the drama audition, a student must do a three-minute monologue and act out the solution to a problem on stage.

The final decision on whether a student gets into the program is made by a committee, following state Department of Education guidelines for placing exceptional children.

"The idea was to start a new program in gifted education in the areas which had not been developed," said Ms. Gay. Boone's gifted program in the arts began four years ago with federal money targeted for innovative local ideas. The county now pays for the program.

"I'm looking for a commitment to the arts and a great deal of interest," explained Ms. Gay. "I want to find out about the child."

Both teachers say they kept in mind the unique characteristics of Appalachian children when they decided what to look for in participants. Ms. Gay said research shows that students from this region are good at games and have a

PUPPET PREPARATIONS — Students Thelma Wills, left, Shelda Pritchard, right, and their classmates prepare for a puppet show scheduled for May 23 at Scott High School as teacher Bobbie Gay keeps an eye on the action. — Daily Mail Photo by Craig Cunningham

BOONE GIFTED PROGRAM

flair for figurative language. Mrs. Phillips looks for art work with depth and detail, even if the product lacks the sophistication spawned by exposure to masterpieces.

Many times, Boone students have not even traveled to the Cultural Center in Charleston, she said.

"A lot of them wouldn't get there if we didn't take them," said Mrs. Phillips. But two of her students, winners in a state art competition, now have had their work on display there.

Scott High School Principal Richard Clendenin said he supports the program. But he believes the students would benefit more if they could schedule the special gifted course as part of the school day, rather than take time away from other classes for those activities.

"That labels the kids," said Clendenin.

But the arts program gives youngsters who have talents outside of academics a chance to excel, he added.

"I think our program, in that respect, is better than in larger areas, like Kanawha," said Clendenin.

The teachers say they have seen the students' talents bloom.

"I've seen a change in self-concept," said Ms. Gay. "They're more aware of who they are and what they can do as a person. They've become more expressive, not only in this class, but in their home schools as well."

Boone County
Art And Drama
*Gifted Program**

Grades Served:
Drama 7-12; Art 1-12

Number of Students: 35 - Drama
(1.2% of 7-12 Population)
25 - Art
(.4% of 1-12 Population)

Number of Teachers: 2

Type of Program:
Itinerant/Resource

* Based on figures supplied by Boone County school officials.

She credits community members for helping the drama program grow.

Mrs. Phillips' students contribute $5 from the money they make at the annual art show sale to the program.

"We generally spend all our money on good supplies, good paint brushes and quality canvas," she said.

Nine of her students are getting college credit through Southern West Virginia Community College for their work in the gifted program.

"The kids get so much emotionally from each other. It's really important," said Mrs. Phillips. "Creative kids are different. They're more high-strung and more dramatic about things than other children."

Scott High School junior Kathy Adams took top awards for her puppetry and stage makeup skills at a recent West Virginia University competition.

"This program is extremely effective," said the 17-year-old. "I can learn more in three hours here than I can learn in a week in a regular class."

The small group, the time for one-on-one work with the teacher are assets, she said.

"From second grade, I have thought I wanted to be an artist. work with my hands," said Miss Adams. "I would go out of my mind if I had to sit in high school and not be able to work on my art."

Miss Adams wants to go on to WVU and learn how to use her artistic talents to make stage plays come alive.

"These are things she wouldn't have been exposed to unless she was in this program," said Mrs. Phillips.

Sherman High School senior Jay Watson is unequivocal in his evaluation of the gifted program in art.

"I would say this is the highlight of my school experience," he said.

Other art classes were uninspiring, Watson explained.

"Because of the limit of supplies and time, I didn't pick up anything I didn't already know," he added.

Watson said he gets "mostly admiration" for his work. The teachers said males seem to have little trouble fitting into the arts program.

"It's worth it to me, seven times over," said Watson. "This helps you express yourself. Everybody needs that."

But Watson and Miss Adams part ways when it comes to where art will lead them after graduation.

"Right now, it's just a hobby," said Watson, who thinks he will go into the roofing business after high school. "I don't plan on going into the field as a career, but I think I could if I had to."

His classmate thinks her interest in art will take her first to college, then out of Boone County.

"There's not that much to come back to," Miss Adams said.

Ninth in a Series

May 11, 1981

9 Counties Getting Federal Help For Low-Income Gifted Students

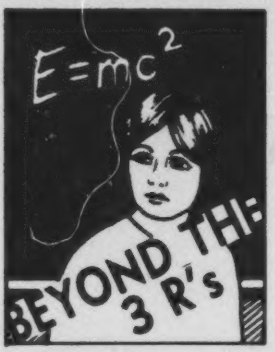
By ELIZABETH OLDER
Of The Daily Mail Staff

State educators admit that rural students, minorities and females don't have a fair chance at getting into a gifted education program in West Virginia.

That discrimination exists largely because teachers and parents don't refer them for consideration.

And some of those youngsters don't do well on the entrance exams because they've grown up in a culture which has crippled their word skills, authorities say.

Nine West Virginia counties now are using federal grants to find ways to successfully choose and school low-income gifted students.



"There's a growing concern that we're being unfair," said Barbara Jones, gifted coordinator for the state. "Among the people with whom I work, I'm seeing a growing concern for children who are culturally diverse, extremely rural or economically disadvantaged."

State School Superintendent Roy Truby thinks relying on test scores to choose gifted students causes problems because the scores are a product of more than just intelligence.

"The number of books at home, the way language is spoken at home, subscriptions to magazines, the benefit of travel — all of these are things that are tied to the social and educational status of the parents and are reflected in test scores," said the superintendent, who grew up in the Louisville, Ky., area.

Under current Board of Education guidelines, counties receive three times the normal amount of state funding for gifted students who score two or more standard deviations above average on an individual intelligence test. That equals an IQ of 130 or above, compared to the "average" score of 100.

"I think you have to look at more than just test scores," Truby continued. "It should be teacher recommendations. Then, the teacher must be sensitive to each child."

He defends his position this way: "A child with an economically deprived background who is just under the cutoff on the test may be, indeed, more gifted than the one who has had many advantages. That's where the teacher's judgment comes in."

Mrs. Jones explained that when a student is considered for the gifted program, a mound of data is collected from parents, teachers and achievement tests.

"Then we make our decision based on that one [IQ] score," she said. "In the best of all possible worlds, I would like to see those professionals make a decision based on all that information."

Other problems with the identification process also are emerging.

"The largest counties have said they either have no minority children or a handful of minority children in the program," said Mrs. Jones.

A federal Office for Civil Rights report done in 1979 showed that 2.4 percent of the gifted program participants were minorities. The overall school minority count is about 4.3 percent.

"There is a feeling that girls are under-represented," she added.

That same report showed 46.4 percent female participation in the gifted program. Girls make up about 48 percent of the state school group.

Other special education children — the handicapped, the learning disabled and similar groups — also may be missing their chance for gifted education. About 9 percent of West Virginia's students, excluding the gifted, are in some kind of special education program this year. Only 115 of the gifted students — 2.6 percent — are receiving services in some other special education category.

And the state does not know how many poor children are in the gifted program. But officials concede that it's less than 40 percent, the number considered "needy" enough to get free and reduced-rate school meals.

Harvard University researcher Ronald B. Edmonds says that if the gifted population does not reflect the makeup of the total population, there's "something wrong with what you did." He scorns IQ tests as a reliable tool for choosing gifted and talented youngsters.

In West Virginia, most gifted students are found only after someone refers them for program testing. Experts say parents and teachers need to be trained to pinpoint minorities, girls and poor rural children who are intellectually gifted.

In Jackson County, students are being tested for creativity, evaluated by teachers and in other ways so the county can establish "local norms" for gifted students, based on the county's special characteristics.

"What we're trying to find is the kid out there who really has it, but will always be passed over," said special education director Rob Roy Walters. "We're trying to find the ones we've missed ... We don't really know what we're going to come out with."

A similar project is going on in southern West Virginia in the 6-county District I Regional Education Service Agency. A survey of 8,880 low-income children in that area revealed that only 1 percent had been selected for the gifted program. The state has set up eight RESA districts to aid local education systems.

Mike Pyryt, gifted instructor at the College of Graduate Studies, said more than 70 low-income Kanawha students have been referred for program testing as the result of a project aimed at identifying the disadvantaged gifted. Through the program, parents and teachers have been taught to recognize signs of giftedness in these youngsters.

Out of 47 schools in low-income Kanawha districts, only about 80 students have been picked for the program, Pyryt said. That's an "obvious difference" from schools in more prosperous areas, he added.

"Some of the disadvantaged kids are more likely to show their skills in nonverbal ways — story-telling, art, music, drama," said Pyryt, who is conducting the federally funded project for the county.

"They can express their feelings well ... They sing in the choir, draw, quilt or knit. They get reinforced for that," he explained.

Negative reinforcement — an it's-not-smart-for-girls-to-be-smart attitude — works against females who are gifted, Pyryt added.

"There are many girls who start out all right, but when they reach about the seventh grade they achieve less and less," he explained. Girls often are not encouraged to take advanced science and math classes — so-called boys' subjects — so they can't compete in those subjects as they grow older, he added.

"It's very hard for girls in rural areas to move out from the culture," said Mrs. Jones. "We still get girls who think they should have an education only if they can't get a husband or, God forbid, that he should die."

Edwina Pendarvis, gifted instructor at Marshall University, says the best way to help the gifted disadvantaged is to improve their overall education.

She thinks many Appalachian children never get a chance to develop their creativity. And she agrees that more than just the top test-takers have the potential to be gifted.

Pyryt believes that gifted Appalachian children also have to deal with a tradition that tells them to "stay close to home."

"Those who do go to college tend to go close to home, tend to work in the community where they grow up," he said.

"I don't think there are that many gifted students in the hollows of West Virginia thinking they could have been a professor at Harvard," Pyryt added. "Maybe what happened is that they just naturally limited their options."

Tenth in a Series

May 12, 1981

Officials Certain Gifted Program Will Succeed Despite Threats

By ELIZABETH OLDER
Of The Daily Mail Staff

The future of gifted education looks good despite threats of federal budget cuts and criticism that the programs are unnecessary and elitist.

"If the federal government backs off in funding and regulations at the same time, that will mean the states generally will have to step forward and assume that role — pick up the slack," said state school Superintendent Roy Truby. "We've worked well with the Legislature here, and the governor. I see an inclination to do that."

E=mc²
BEYOND THE 3 R's

West Virginia's legal mandate for gifted education is much stronger than the federal government's recommendation for such programs. And gifted education historically has received less federal money than programs in basic skills and other areas.

Federal funding for gifted education was set at $6.2 million for the next school year. But that is threatened by budget cuts now under review in Congress.

"If we try to clone the federal government in those cuts, obviously there will be a loss of gifted programs and others such as that," said Truby.

In West Virginia, counties get three times the normal amount of state funds for each gifted child enrolled in the school system. Nationwide, states sunk almost $118 million into gifted education in 1980-81.

But the Reagan administration's plan to reduce most federal education aid worries John Grossi, gifted specialist with the Council for Exceptional Children in Reston, Va.

"Gifted and talented is going to be very susceptible and very vulnerable with the program cuts, as everything else is," said Grossi. "It will probably be affected greater because we don't have that much support to begin with."

State gifted coordinator Barbara Jones is optimistic about continued state support. But any decrease in federal money will hurt, she said.

"Certainly, the news looks bad for all education programs," she said. "It's just hard to predict what's going to happen."

West Virginia Education Association President Lowell Johnson said he fears counties will cut back on staff to trim budgets. That, coupled with the loss of federal dollars, could stop the growth of gifted and other special education programs, he said.

"It's going to preclude any kind of improvement in programs," said Johnson, who believes the state already is coming up short in special education.

Although gifted education has been called elitist and unnecessary, local educators think the programs have outlived those labels.

"That's something you have to guard against, the elitism, the snob appeal of having students in the gifted program," said Truby. "The gifted programs are very popular now. We've concentrated on one end of the continuum. I think there's a strong feeling now to educate the other end."

But the superintendent said he does not favor separate schools for gifted students because "that takes us too far into the elitist concept." New York, Florida and other states have set up such schools, but program guidelines here exclude them.

"My response, first of all, is that it's not elitist in any way," said Mrs. Jones. "It doesn't have anything to do with social or economic level."

Johnson believes that schoolchildren in West Virginia should have programs which "help kids meet the potential they're capable of."

"It doesn't make any difference if a child is supergifted or severely retarded," he said. "That's one of the things that makes us different from private schools and other countries."

Grossi said, "A lot of people feel the programs are undemocratic because all the kids are not doing what the gifted kids are doing." But that happens in every school on football teams, the school newspaper and in other extracurricular activities, he added.

"What we're talking about is equality of opportunity," Grossi said. "Obviously, everybody is able to apply [for gifted programs]."

College instructor Mike Pyryt draws his defense for gifted education from a historical figure.

"I go back to Thomas Jefferson, who is Mr. Democracy," said Pyryt, a gifted teacher at the College of Graduate Studies. "In his plan for the state of Virginia, when he discussed education, he wrote that gifted people — no matter how poor or how rich — should be able to reach their potential. We're talking about quality of opportunity. It's not meant to be frills or extra. What it's meant to be is appropriate education."

Recent research shows that gifted students do not do as well as they could in school when they don't have special education.

"The more highly gifted the child, the more important it is," said Edwina Pendarvis, Marshall University's gifted education instructor.

"There is some research that shows 15 to 20 percent of all dropouts are gifted," Pyryt explained. "It's important to provide opportunities for kids so they can recognize what their skills are, so they can go on and be productive."

Kanawha student Nathan Harkins remembers that he "never went for the big stuff" — the tougher spelling test — in elementary school.

"I was constantly daydreaming," said the George Washington High School sophomore.

Then, in the seventh grade, he was identified as gifted.

"I think part of being gifted is realizing your limitations, realizing you're not gifted in everything," said Harkins, 16. "I really thought I was average. I just didn't think I was that bright."

Getting picked for the program may have changed his life, he said.

"This has really made a difference because part of excelling is having confidence . . . If I hadn't found out I was gifted, I would probably be flunking right now," Harkins said.

Pyryt puts it this way: "Someone once said that there's no reason for an eagle to be a crow."

Parents Rallying Behind Gifted 'Sure Have Made A Difference'

By ELIZABETH OLDER
Of The Daily Mail Staff

West Virginia parents are rallying behind gifted education to ensure that county school boards provide the services promised by state law.

"I think this sure has made a difference in the county," said Jonathan Kurland, president of the Kanawha Association for Gifted Children.

The parents in Kanawha have been working for several years to get good programs, he said. That has been accomplished, although some still are worried about the drop in junior high participation, he added.

"My next newsletter will just ask where are we going," Kurland said. The mailing goes to about 300 people, and more than 30 usually attend meetings, he said.

"When we started, I think most parents were uncomfortable with the word gifted," said Betsy Humphreys of the Monongalia Association for Enrichment. "It sounds as if you're bragging about your child."

In Monongalia, parents joined forces to exchange information and give support to the county's one gifted teacher, she said.

"I don't think the county was consciously trying to not support this. There was nobody in the administration who was a strong advocate for gifted," said Mrs. Humphreys.

Nearly 50 families now are involved, she said. The parents have developed a list of community resources the schools can use in gifted classes.

"Overall, I think people are very pleased. I think group support was helpful," said Mrs. Humphreys.

Harrison County parents plan to set up Saturday workshops for gifted children who are interested.

"We have made proposals to the special education department. I think about every proposal we've made has been implemented," said parent Brenda Sheets, a member of the county gifted association.

"I think every county should have a parent group because — as I have learned in my dealings with school boards and county administrators — unless the parents push for it, it won't be done," said Mrs. Sheets. "You can't sit by and say somebody else will do it."

With gifted education "very far down on the totem pole," funding for the programs is threatened, she added.

Pocahontas parents started an advocacy group this year.

"I think the board is trying. I think they realize they have to," said parent Mary Brundage.

The parents hope to convince the county administration to hire more teachers for the gifted program, she said.

"We do have some problems with peer pressure and acceptance," she said. "I think parents can do an awful lot."

More than 80 parents have attended meetings of the Cabell County Association for the Gifted and Talented.

"I think parents are a little disturbed," said Candy Springer, president of the group. "The program is good in some aspects and not good in others."

The Cabell group wants to set up workshops to educate parents, teachers and anyone else who is interested in gifted programs, she said. Parents also may be called upon to work with gifted youngsters on the job, she added.

"I feel these gifted kids are the future leaders of America," said Mrs. Springer. "We can't sit by and watch these kids suffer."

State gifted coordinator Barbara Jones advises parents to "look around the room" during meetings and remember people they can talk over problems with later.

"Because of confidentiality, we can't identify a gifted child or parents of a gifted child unless they come forward," she explained.

The groups also provide a forum for trading information about worthwhile games, toys and other educational materials, she added.

"There's a myth that parents of gifted kids are exceptionally pushy or obnoxious," Mrs. Jones continued. "That's not true."

Parents and other citizens may call a toll-free hot line at the state Department of Education to request information about programs for all exceptional children. The department will send a packet of information about those programs.

One publication — "Hand in Hand" — explains the state laws and guidelines. It includes an explanation of the due process procedure parents may use to protest a school's ruling about a child's program placement.

The toll-free hot line number is 800-642-8541.

The Council for Exceptional Children also has written guidelines for parents to use in forming advocacy groups. The council can be contacted at 1920 Association Drive, Reston, Va. 22091.

Oregon
Journal

Portland, Oregon
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First in a Series

Minorities give Oregon schools new flavor

CAROL RUBENSTEIN

Carol Rubenstein has been covering the Portland Public Schools as education reporter for the *Oregon Journal* since 1979. Her education background includes a Bachelor's degree from the University of Chicago and post graduate work at Portland State University.

Rubenstein's reporting for the *Journal* coincided with the period during which minority education issues became more pressing in the state. Increasing numbers of Hispanic and Southeast Asian children—many exposed to written language and mathematical concepts for the first time—were joining the state's historical minorities of blacks and native Americans.

For her Fellowship study Rubenstein chose to investigate how schools located in predominately white communities were able to effectively serve the four minority groups.

In the following "Minority Report" Rubenstein profiles schools which were viewed as offering exemplary programs for various minority group students. She found that there was no rigid model for an effective school. All the effective schools, however, had important elements in common: students didn't get lost in the shuffle; schools had high expectations for their students and staffs; flexible approaches to teaching were used; and teachers recognized the value of other cultures.

Journal staff writer Carol Rubenstein this spring received a National Institute of Education fellowship to research Oregon minority education.

By CAROL RUBENSTEIN
Journal Staff Writer

- *Quyen Chu, a young Vietnamese girl in Portland, guides Meuy Meng, a Laotian girl just arrived in the United States, through the confusion of her first day of school.*

"Door," Quyen says in English, tapping the classroom door with her hand. "Desk," she continues. "Chair."

Meuy Meng looks without understanding. She keeps her thick wool coat on all day.

- *Enrique Salinas and his sister, Estela, dash to their reading group at Dayton Elementary School. "Todos," they shout as teacher Gloria Valencia holds up a flash card. "Tal," they continue in Spanish. "Tiempo. Ti."*

- *At Eliot School, in Northeast Portland, a rainbow-hued contingent of 4-year-olds squirms into a circle as they begin their morning routine with a song. "We all live together," the voices join. "Yes, we all live together."*

These are but a few scenes from the changing landscape of Oregon education.

In the past five years, the number of minority students in the state's public schools has increased by more than 35 percent.

The total includes Asians, Hispanics, blacks and American Indians.

The sharpest increases have been among Asian students, whose numbers have nearly doubled, from 5,586 to 9,901, making them the second-largest student minority group in the state.

Hispanics rank first, with their numbers increasing by nearly a third, from 8,342 in 1975 to 11,022 in 1980.

Oregon schools: Minority report

The number of blacks has increased slightly, to 9,389 students, ranking third. State school figures also register an increase in Indian students, from 5,081 in 1975 to 7,584 in 1980.

At the same time, the number of white students has dropped about 4 percent, to 91.7 percent of the state's total public school enrollment.

THE CHANGES have come slowly in some communities, more dramatically in others. They've been sparked by a number of factors, migration and variation in birth rate among them. And they've been accommodated with varying degrees of success.

Photomontage by BILL MORROW

STEVE NEHL and ROGER JENSEN/Oregon Journal

NEW CLASSMATES — The number of minority students in Oregon's classrooms has jumped by more than 35 percent in the past five years. How the state's public schools cope with their changing clientele will be among the major challenges of the 1980s.

But one thing is certain. The changes will continue. And with them have come new challenges for Oregon's schools.

"We're not a melting pot," observed Carlos Reyes-Colon of the Committee of Spanish-Speaking People of Oregon. "We're more like a salad bowl, each with our own texture and flavor."

The role schools should play in maintaining those individual flavors or in promoting assimilation, and how each best could be done, has been the subject of national as well as local debate.

Federal regulations, teachers, parents and community groups all have pressed for new examinations of what kind of education programs are best suited for the state's varied students.

AMONG THE ISSUES are bilingual education, the importance of parental involvement, concentration on basic skills and the need for multi-cultural education.

Ask the questions in different communities and you'll get different answers.

But overall there's a concern that the schools must help their communities adapt to a changing, more diverse world.

In Portland, where the number of Asian students has more than trebled in the last five years, School Board Chairman Forrest Rieke is worried.

"We're unable to accommodate the radical changes in this community," he said flatly.

It's a stark message, one describing a situation that Rieke believes challenges Oregonians to live up to their professed ideals.

"Everyone thinks of themselves as progressive," he observed. "But no one is anxious to change.

"Until we find a way to do so, it will be an agonizing time for this community."

THE CHALLENGE, as it always has been for public schools, is to educate children to can read, write, function and compete in the world.

But what schools do to make that happen depends on whether a student is an Indian child living on a reservation in Central Oregon, a black youngster from the poorest section of a big city, the child of Spanish-speaking immigrants or a recent refugee from the mountains of Vietnam.

Whatever the case, the demands on teacher, school and district necessarily are greater than they would be if the task were simply educating middle-class children of any ethnic group.

Those demands are ones to which Oregon's school districts *must* rise, says state School Superintendent Verne Duncan.

And that means that many schools will have to change.

The traditional approach, "let them adjust to the ways we do things," is too simplistic, Duncan said. "It just won't work. Both sides have to bend."

If the schools don't, Duncan believes, we all will be paying a high price for a long time.

"The children will still be there," he said.

THE RESULTS have been mixed as Oregon's schools have tried to accommodate their changing clientele. But throughout the state there have been encouraging signs.

This series, funded in part by a National Institute of Education fellowship, will examine some of them:

- Eliot School, a national model for early childhood education, is located in what once was the heart of Portland's black community, with more than half of its students classified as "educationally disadvantaged." By the time they leave Eliot those students are testing at the district norm in reading and math.
- Boise School in Portland is a fundamental skills school that emphasizes reading, math and discipline for a student population that is 75 percent poor black, 20 percent Asian refugee.
- Rice Elementary is Portland's most recently "segregated" school, as defined by state and federal standards. Six years ago the building received its first Asian refugee child. Today, refugees account for 100 of the schoos's 185 students — challenging both teachers and community.
- Dayton Elementary, a rural grade school pioneering a bilingual, Spanish-English program, is in a community that just six years ago was charged with discriminating against its Spanish-speaking students.
- Warm Springs Elementary, a public school on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation, is experimenting with new reading and counseling programs that its staff hopes will help Indian students stay in school.

While these schools offer no easy answers, they illustrate the ways some educators are attempting to meet the challenges of the future.

They're not necessarily perfect, but they're a beginning.

Second in a Series

June 16, 1981

'The bottom line is respect'

Kids come first at Eliot School

By CAROL RUBENSTEIN
Journal Staff Writer

Over at Eliot School, they call Bob Harold "boss," "great white father," or simply "the head of the house."

The terms are those of affection and respect.

And Bob Harold fits the description. Six feet tall, 58 years old, with a strong Irish profile, a shock of white hair and sharp blue eyes, he has left an indelible impression on the school he has shepherded for the past 13 years.

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Since he became principal of the school, located in one of Portland's poorest neighborhoods, Harold has transformed it into a national model for early childhood education and seems to have written the original prescription for "how to have an effective school."

Most importantly, Eliot makes a difference in the lives of its children.

The school, which houses a federally funded Follow-Through program to improve achievement for "disadvantaged" poor black and white children, has done just that.

ACHIEVEMENT tests indicate that those children, traditionally among the lowest-scoring in the Portland district, are reaching district norms in reading and math by the time they leave the early childhood center.

When they leave eighth grade, the Eliot grads, on average, still score above national norms, although slipping a bit below district averages.

However, their scores still are markedly higher than those of similar students in nearby neighborhoods.

And there's proof in other, more personal ways.

Take James, for example. A problem child who had been kicked out of other schools even in kindergarten, he threw only one chair his first year at Eliot. Now, when he's angry, he just points.

Andrew, who wouldn't look anybody in the eye when he came to the school, now runs up to a teacher and booms out "Hi!"

Moreover, parents are involved, staff morale is high — and no student seems to get lost in "the system."

WHAT MAKES the difference?

If you ask anyone at the school — principal, teachers, aides or parent volunteers — the answer is the same: the kids come first.

What that means is that the school is ready to step in with whatever's necessary — be it clean clothes, arranging for medical care or eyeglasses — to make sure the children can concentrate on classwork.

Eliot doesn't even require tennis shoes in gym class, since many students can't afford them.

Harold's philosophy, which has shaped Eliot, is that school has to find a way to make kids feel good about themselves. From that little boost of self-confidence, a thousand flowers can bloom.

"The bottom line," says curriculum coordinator Mary Alice Thompson, "is respect for others and yourself.

"If you don't feel good about yourself, you're not going to do well."

The school is a modest building, two stories and 500 kids, located just north of Memorial Coliseum. In 1954, its construction sparked bitter debate about intentional segregation, since the area was predominantly black. But that was before urban renewal and eminent domain swept away most of the neighborhood.

A FEW HOMES still border the school, which draws only about 50 of its students from the neighborhood. The rest are bused in from all parts of the city.

There's always a waiting list for admission, sometimes with as many as 200 students vying for 80 openings in the prekindergarten program for 4-year-olds.

Today about half of Eliot's students are white, another 40 percent are black, a handful are Hispanic, Asian and American Indian.

Some 280 students are officially classified as low income, or poor, a designation that in many schools automatically would translate into, "They aren't going to make it anyhow."

But not at Eliot.

"We're here," emphasizes Kristy Gravlin, a veteran staffer, "for the kids who wouldn't otherwise make it."

Educational administrators routinely say Eliot is the best school in the city for black children. Parents says it's the best school for young children, period.

The same things that make it good for black children are what make it good for everyone — strong leadership, good teachers and that philosophy of putting the child first.

"I don't say we save everyone," Kristy Gravlin shrugs. "But we've saved quite a few."

A SENSE OF mission, common purpose and camaraderie is evideht, as are the school's high expectations for its children.

Bob Harold will not tolerate staff members who have low expectations, who think poor, and especially black, children are more to be pitied than challenged.

He's weeded out five teachers during his tenure at Eliot. "Now," he smiles, "I do a better job of hiring."

The building itself is cramped and cheerfully cluttered, much like a teenager's room. There are pictures of staff members greeting kids as they walk through the school doors, newspaper articles about staff, students and their families deck some of the walls, while samples of student art work festoon others.

When Harold shows visitors around, he apologizes for the boxes and pianos stacked in the halls. But he's proud, too, that no inch of space, whether corridor or broom closet, goes unused.

Everything — and everyone — is pressed into educational service.

Parents, especially, are encouraged to help at the school in any way they choose, and Eliot has racked up an impressive average of 188 hours a week of parent volunteer time.

For several years, Harold has routinely asked parents to help him interview prospective teachers — a practice that just this year is being extended to several other Portland schools after heated discussion.

Any educational statistician, Harold acknowledges, will say that parent involvement doesn't make a difference in a child's success. But he and his staff maintain it's essential.

ANOTHER CRUCIAL ingredient is a thorough, but not always obvious, organization.

Nothing is neglected at Eliot — from a teacher's progress with a particularly difficult pupil to a pressing need for clean sheets in the baby-sitting room, where

[illegible] regularly teaches a mini-class to [illegible] of the early childhood center in Northeast Portland.

parents drop off younger children when they stop by the school.

Class schedules are posted outside every teacher's door, making clear the format for the week's work.

Virginia Danzer, basic skills coordinator, maintains a "child at a glance" book that helps track student progress — progress that is routinely discussed at regular grade level and special staff meetings.

Even the sign-in sheet in the main office is filled with notes, letting everyone in the school know what's going on.

There is meticulous attention to detail, with Harold becoming involved, if necessary, in the smallest item.

"When I first started working here," recalls Debbie Pollock, coordinator of student enrichment, "I couldn't understand why Mr. Harold was so concerned — obsessed, really — with whether there was enough pop in the machine in the staff room."

The first time she went to the room for a break after a particularly tough teaching day, she understood.

Concern for staff morale, from the small things like having a cool drink at the right time to strong support for new teaching techniques, is part of what Harold has built into his school.

HE HIRES good people, gives them their head and supports them down the line, say staff members who credit part of the school's success to Harold's management style.

"His only criteria," says Mrs. Gravlin, "is will it work?"

Harold says that a combination of democratic and autocratic management is essential.

"I believe you have to involve people," he says from an office filled with student artwork and staff notes. "But I also believe there have to be standards."

For Harold, those standards include two hours of each class day spent on the basics of reading, language arts and math, coupled with opportunities for all students to learn more about the world and themselves.

Every classroom has a teacher and an aide, with a host of other specialists available to work one-on-one or in small groups with students needing special help in reading, math, speech or counseling.

And several times each month, Debbie Pollock coordinates an explosion of mini-courses that introduce the children to everything from stilt-making to foreign languages.

"We hit them with everything," explains Harold. "If they can just feel success somewhere, that can make the difference."

His program is expensive, Harold admits. The extra staffing, luxurious by most public school standards, costs an extra $4.57 per child per day, adding about $846 to the $2,264 the district spends per child each year.

That's ultimately a good investment, Harold insists. It's cheaper, he notes, than $11.50 per day he estimates is spent on welfare or the $46.58 daily charge for keeping someone in state prison.

DESPITE THE near certainty of severe federal budget cuts, Harold is convinced his program will continue to do the job he expects of it.

"You probably could do a good job even with five teachers and 125 kids," he mused, "if somehow you could get that group to work as a team."

That teamwork exists at Eliot. And, according to Connie Fitzgerald, head of the parent advisory committee, it's made Eliot the best public school for young children in the city.

The school's success, she says, is not due to Bob Harold's charisma or to some magic that can't be duplicated at other schools.

Rather, she says, it's due to hard work, foresight and a dash of wisdom.

"It's people working together," she says, "sharing a common dream."

Third in a Series

June 17, 1981

Boise pupils stress basics, rules of living

By CAROL RUBENSTEIN
Journal Staff Writer

It was a Wednesday at Boise School, time for the weekly circle meeting in Room 102.

About two dozen children — three Asian, four white, the rest black — were gathered comfortably in Michelle Antonell's room, talking.

Suddenly Tonya, a fourth-grader, became the subject of conversation. Had she crowded into the jump rope line at recess?

Well, Tonya admitted after some prodding, maybe she had muscled her way to the front of the line.

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"You've got to live by the rules," reminds Ron Dieu, a teacher who regularly leads the discussion sessions. "If you don't like the rules, you don't have to play."

THE RULES ARE important at Boise, a school where education is very serious business.

It's also a school that has some of the the city's lowest scores in reading and math achievement.

"I tell the students that going to school is their job," says Dieu, basic skills coordinator.

"If they don't do their job, the teacher can't do hers."

Portland's only remaining black neighborhood grade school, Boise is a back-to-the-basics place that concentrates on a few items and tries to do them well.

It is a school that has come a long way on a narrow path.

"We succeed here because we have very narrow goals," says Principal Dave McCrea.

"We teach reading and math. And we manage behavior."

Boise is one of the city's most racially segregated schools. There are only a few whites among its 525 students, and the city's recent influx of Asian refugees has boosted total minority enrollment to more than 90 percent.

AT ONE TIME, the school was overcrowded to the point that there seemed to be no discipline.

"It was like a blackboard jungle in the early '60s," when there were nearly 1,000 students, recalled a former staffer. "It was just wild."

That was when the baby boom was hitting the public schools, before declining enrollments and busing for desegregation thinned out Boise's population.

And it was before Dave McCrea became principal 11 years ago and instituted a tough discipline policy.

The school has four simple rules, the principal explains. "You don't fight, you don't steal, you don't profane adults and you don't defy authority."

Any infraction of the four basics and the student is sent home. It's not counted as a formal suspension, so there is no appeal. The student can't come back to class unless he is accompanied by an adult.

BOISE AVERAGES three of the "send homes" a day.

"The worst thing parents can say about us," McCrea contends, "is that we don't care enough about their kids to see that they behave properly."

A direct, blunt-spoken man with a ready sense of humor, McCrea has won the support of a black community that frequently is critical of white principals.

"He cares about the kids, cares that they learn," says Vesia Loving, an active member of the Black United Front who has been an aide at Boise for 12 years.

"And he cares about the community, too," she adds. "He'll stand up for it."

McCrea frequently has gone to bat for Boise, a problem building for the school district because of its high minority enrollment. The district has vacillated between strengthening Boise as a neighborhood school and converting it to another use.

Last year, the district added a pre-kindergarten section and extra staff to convert the lower grades to an enriched early childhood program. This year, it talks about making Boise the permanent home of the new Harriet Tubman Middle School, temporarily housed at Monroe High School.

But five years ago, the district approved Boise's formal conversion to a fundamental skills school, a special program aimed at attracting more white students to the heavily segregated school.

The "magnet" didn't work. Few white students transferred in, but Boise has continued its concentration on the basics.

THAT'S SOMETHING, the staff explains, that the students need.

The addition of Asian students, mostly Hmong refugees from northern Laos, has underscored the school's emphasis on basic academic skills.

The newcomers, about 125 this year, spend part of the day in special English classes, the rest of the time with American students.

Because the Hmong have no written language and most of the children never have been to school before, their presence means that teachers have to be extremely well-organized and often must juggle several reading groups at once.

One afternoon, for example, a fourth-grade teacher was supervising three youngsters learning to trace the alphabet while drilling a second group on simple vocabulary.

"I worry," said another teacher, "that the new students take away from the attention we can give the others."

BASIC BOOKS — Barbara Hodges, right, tosses a playful grin at Jeanette Holmes, who is deep in her dictionary assignment in Patty Zimmerman's sixth-grade class at Boise School. Asian students in the background are working with a teacher aide.

STEVE NEHL/Oregon Journal

BY ALL ACCOUNTS, however, Boise students are getting along well with their new classmates.

Some have volunteered to tutor in English, others to introduce the Laotian villagers to roller-skating.

"I think the Asians have even helped our students become more motivated about school," observes Shirley House, who teaches second and third grade.

About 75 percent of each school day at Boise is spent on reading, writing, spelling, math and geography. This year some music courses were added. Several computer terminals were added, used by low-achieving students for drills and by high-achieving students for math and other projects.

"No other school can say they're teaching the rest of the curriculum unless they're using the basic . skills," emphasizes Laura Glosson, one of Boise's four black teachers.

Despite the increased emphasis on basic skills, however, Boise student test scores still are among the district's lowest.

"WE'RE DOING BETTER than we did before," McCrea says, pointing to slight gains in the school's comparative performance. "But we're not doing as well as we should."

The principal says he expects Boise's gains to continue and believes additional basic skills emphasis will cause further improvements.

Staff additions made this year, including a full-time aide for every classroom and basic skills and curriculum coordinators, also should help boost the school's performance, he notes.

Staff members offer various explanations for the low socres, ranging from students who aren't "test-wise" to the "skimming" of Boise's best students by other schools.

Others point to the fact that many Boise students are poor and come from broken or unstable homes.

"I wish I could give all the students two-parent families," said one teacher when asked what changes should be made in the school.

POOR WHITE SCHOOLS also rank low in achievement tests, notes Vice Principal Sam Mansfield. "Our school is as good as any in the city in this socio-economic bracket," he maintains.

Still others say that test scores are only part of the story.

Boise has to be understood in terms of its history, they say. It's a building that has managed to overcome a reputation as a tough, volatile school with uncontrollable students.

The first battle was to ensure that students could go to school in a safe, secure environment.

Now that that's been achieved, the argument goes, academics can be emphasized.

Herb Cawthorne, the only black member of the Portland School Board, doesn't dispute the test scores but says there are advantages for black students who attend mostly black schools.

"They're not constantly in an environment that tells them they are inferior," says Cawthorne. "That's what happens to black kids who are bused and who are on someone else's turf.

"At Boise, black children learn to accept the Asian students — and each other."

Fourth in a Series

June 18, 1981

Rice struggles to cope with load of Asian students

By CAROL RUBENSTEIN
Journal Staff Writer

It is Meuy Meng's first day at Rice School in Northeast Portland.

Through the classroom window the nine-year-old Laotian girl can see shirt-sleeved men rolling golf carts through the manicured grass at Rose City Golf Course.

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It is spring. She burrows deeper into her thick blue and red plaid coat.

Later, in gym class, she sits on a chair while her classmates play. By the end of the period, she's tentatively bouncing a ball. She starts to smile, shyly.

The scene has been repeated innumerable times since Rice School received its first Asian refugee child six years ago.

Today more than half of the school's 185 children are Vietnamese and Laotian, some of the earliest and most recent of the flood of refugees who have come to Portland from Southeast Asia.

Rice's transformation from a mostly middle-class white, "country club" kind of school to a station on the front lines of refugee resettlement has come rapidly — too rapidly in some cases for parents and teachers to adjust.

"We look like we're strictly from National Geographic," quips one teacher.

"I'm afraid the Asians are taking away from the attention our students get," says a white parent.

Principal Thelma Brown has a different assessment. "The district," she says, "is sitting on a time bomb."

Mrs. Brown, who became principal at Rice last fall, is convinced the district's schools must change if they are to meet the challenge posed by their newest students.

The transformation at Rice, just a few blocks from the Halsey Square apartment complex where many of the city's Mien live, is more dramatic, perhaps, than at other schools with smaller numbers of Asian refugees. But its problems are shared by other schools in Portland and throughout the state that are trying to cope with students they were not prepared for.

Six years ago, Oregon had about 5,000 Asian students, Portland 1,300.

Now, the state figure has doubled. Portland's has nearly tripled.

Asian students — mostly Laotian and Vietnamese — account for 6.8 percent of Portland's enrollment, a figure that experts say may jump to 15 percent in the next decade.

Those figures pose a strong challenge for the public schools.

The students come from a variety of countries and cultures, speak diverse languages and have very different educational backgrounds — all of which complicates the educational task.

Federal money picks up only a small portion of the $1,100 more per child that it costs Portland schools to educate non-English-speaking children, and there are few aides and fewer teachers who speak both the children's language and English.

Portland has about two dozen bilingual Asian teachers, about half of them Vietnamese.

Most of the children at Rice are Mien, a Laotian tribe, and Vietnamese. Generally, the Vietnamese are from cities in their home country, have some education in their own language and have been in the United States for several years.

The Mièn, in contrast, are more recent arrivals a primitive rural people who have no written language and little schooling.

"When you look at their camps or villages," reflects Diane Penner, the English-as-a-Second-Language teacher at Rice, "it was a whole different world."

They cooked with wood fires, slept on floors and believed in spirits, she explains. Our family life, with children living away from parents, is strange to them, she says, but they seem to like American television and cars.

Many of the children have gone through experiences that seem incredible to their American classmates.

It is not uncommon for a child to have lost a parent or relative in the flight from their homeland or in the refugee camps. For many, death was a constant companion.

Some recent arrivals must be taught how to use indoor bathrooms and how to bathe themselves. Many need dental work because their tissues are rotting from years of malnutrition. They need clothes.

The task for the classroom teacher is staggering.

"These kids need so much more," Diane Penner says. "The classroom teacher really doesn't have time to help them."

Ms. Penner, new at Rice this year, works with more than 80 children each day, giving them special instruction in English.

The school's only English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) teacher, she works out of a converted storage area off the gym, a small space filled with up to 10 students at a time.

Two male aides, a Vietnamese and a Mien, also work with the students. An ESL aide was added to the school's staff this spring.

But mostly the job is left to the school's seven classroom teachers and their aides, each of whom has developed her own ways of coping.

Mary Bartholomaus, who teaches third grade, just reaches into the stack of learning games that she's kept from the days when she taught kindergarten.

"I get them busy when they first come in," says Mrs. Bartholomaus, who assigns an Asian student "buddy" to guide newcomers through the routines of restroom, lunchtime, playground and class activities.

Sharon Surratt, a fourth grade aide, leads a regular "circle meeting" to get Asian and American students talking with each other about feelings and experiences.

Louise Hein, a fourth grade teacher, just tries to challenge all her students.

"I analyze what a kid is capable of and try to push it," she says.

"A lot of tim~~es," she explains, "you get~~ what you expect "

Teaching at Rice is sometimes frustrating, teachers admit, because of the time needed to develop lessons for the range of students. Several classes have as many as eight reading groups and four or five math groups.

One teacher describes the situation as simply "horrendous. It's almost like individualized instruction," she says.

Louise Hein is troubled because her class could be moving at a faster clip.

Several of her students, including Vietnamese youths, already are performing advanced work for extra credit.

"It's frustrating," she says. "You don't want the light to go out."

Fifth in a Series

NEW HEIGHTS — Sou Kouy Saechao, left, and Muang Vong Saechao sail through the air with exuberant ease as they play an Asian version of jumprope before classes start at Rice School. More than half the school's students are Asian refugees — mostly Mien, a Laotian tribe, and Vietnamese.

The pressure is heightened because some of the new students, who arrive at the rate of about 10 a month, are starting from scratch.

"It's as if you were starting with a baby," explains Thelma Brown. "They're learning from the beginning."

Vietnamese children generally know colors and other concepts in their own language. That can't be assumed with the Mien, Mrs. Brown says.

To help ease the burden on the classroom, the principal is applying for school district money to start a "newcomer" orientation program at Rice — something teachers working with refugee students throughout the district say is desperately needed.

The Portland district briefly operated a newcomer program for Asian elementary-age students last fall, but the program fell victim to budget cutbacks. There is a half-year newcomer program for high school students, however.

Despite the problems, Rice staffers say the Asian students have been a boon to the school. They've broadened the horizons of the American students, have made them more tolerant and have ven-even added to their repertoire of games — a universal language among children.

But some parents and staff are concerned that the newcomers may cheat Rice's traditional students.

"Those students have to get their just dues, too," said one teacher.

Another says that Rice still is doing a good job on the basics, but she fears enrichment activities are suffering.

Some white parents at Rice, worried about their children's education, are considering enrolling them in nearby Rose City Park, a predominantly white school.

In some ways, that action seems a replay of the "white flight" it was feared would accompany racial desegregation. And it has school officials worried.

"People accept that it (the Asian influx) will affect their programs in a negative fashion," says Portland School Board Chairman Forrest Rieke.

"I don't know how we're going to deal with it."

It's clear to Rieke and others in the district that Thelma Brown and her staff have their work cut out for them. And they may have the solution.

"It's just good, organized teaching," says Mary Bartholomaus, when asked what the schools need to do.

"You take the kids where they are. And work with them."

Bilingual class plan good? It's muy bien

By CAROL RUBENSTEIN
Journal Staff Writer

DAYTON — Spanish sounds are just a matter of course in Gloria Valencia's classroom. *"Risa, rie, rato, loro, mire,"* a group of first-graders chant as they learn the basics of reading in their native language.

That's part of the philosophy of Dayton Elementary School's acclaimed bilingual education program.

Six years ago, the U.S. Health, Education and Welfare Department accused the rural Yamhill County school district of discriminating against its Spanish-speaking students.

Oregon schools

Minority report

Today Dayton can boast of one of the state's outstanding programs for Hispanic youth.

Begun four years ago with one kindergarten and a first grade group, the bilingual program now offers the dual language option through grade five for both Anglo and Hispanic students.

"We have an obligation in this community," says program director Antonio Fernandez, "to give children an equal educational opportunity."

For the 31-year-old Fernandez, a Mexican-American who grew up in San Jose, Calif., that translates into bilingual education.

Next year, when a sixth grade class is added, the opportunity will be available at all levels in Dayton's single elementary school.

The small town, population 1,420, located on the banks of the Yamhill River about 30 miles southwest of Portland, seems an unlikely setting for a progressive program.

But its growing number of Hispanics, now about 30 percent of the town's population and a similar portion of the school enrollment, are changing the character of the 100-year-old settlement.

Most of the newer residents are Mexican-Americans who work on farms or the several large nurseries nearby. Some of them came 20 or 25 years ago, decided to stay, bought homes and are building the first Catholic church in the predominantly Protestant community.

The bilingual program, its supporters say, has built an important bridge between the two groups.

"I want my children to know some of the language and culture of the Chicano people," says Walter Yungen, a school board member whose son and daughter are signed up for bilingual education. "They need to become friends."

The program's philosophy is simple, the structure a bit more complicated.

Basically, the program enrolls about 130 students, some 60 percent Hispanic and 40 percent Anglo, and aims to turn out youngsters who are fluent in two languages.

Each of the program's six teachers are specially trained in bilingual education in addition to English and Spanish. Half are Hispanic, the other half Anglo.

General instructions, such as classroom directions, are about evenly divided between English and Spanish, but students do their academic work in whatever language they're most comfortable with.

About half an hour each day is spent on English as a second language or Spanish as a second language instruction.

For Anglo children, it's an enrichment opportunity, a chance to become familiar with another language and culture at the age when it can almost become second nature.

For the Spanish-speaking children, the program buys the time needed to help them master curriculum basics.

The ultimate goal for Spanish-speaking children is to master English, Fernandez emphasizes. But teaching basic subjects like reading and math in Spanish helps capitalize on what the kids already know.

Why halt a child's progress in other subjects, he asks, for the year or so it will take him to master English?

By that time, the student usually is behind his classmates, standing at the edge of a gap that may never be breached.

Bilingual education doesn't mean a separate, parallel curriculum for Spanish and English students, emphasizes Dayton Superintendent Rich McCullough, a staunch supporter of Fernandez' efforts.

That's the common misunderstanding, the superintendent says. "Our goal is full literacy in English for all of our children."

According to Fernandez, there's another, less tangible benefit for Hispanic children who walk into a classroom where *their* language and culture are valued.

He explains in an anecdote.

A child comes into a classroom terrified of school, not speaking English. It's a new country, a new language.

The teacher says, "Como se llama (What's your name)?"

You can't measure the effect, Fernandez says, but that experience makes a difference in how the child will feel about school — and how well he will do.

"If you feel good, you'll have confidence," Fernandez says. "If you have confidence, there's no obstacle that can't be overcome."

The program itself testifies to Fernandez' belief. Begun in 1977 with a five-year federal grant totalling about $257,000 for start-up costs, the program's tab now is almost totally absorbed by the district, and bilingual education seems as if it's always been a part of the Dayton community.

Part of the reason for the program's success is that there are few additional costs associated with it. The schools have to hire teachers for the students anyway. Now they simply look for bilingual teachers.

The program has high expectations for its students, and teachers work hard to make sure that the time spent in school helps students learn.

They simply don't waste time.

Hope Crandall's second graders were all lined up for lunch one day when there was a snafu in the cafeteria. Instead of fidgeting for five minutes, they popped back to their seats for a quickie spelling quiz.

"Kids aren't like TV sets," says Fernandez. "You can't recall them if they don't turn out right."

"We need to do our job every day."

It's a cooperative effort, with teachers and director joining with parents and community.

Parents help hire the teachers, who are part of the elementary school's regular staff, and they help out with special activities, such as the annual Posada Christmas procession through town and the Cinco de Mayo community celebration of Mexican Independence Day.

"I tell the teachers we work for the

NUEVE
NIEVA

STEVE NEHL/Oregon Journal

HABLAMOS ESPANOL — First graders in Gloria Valencia's class at Dayton Elementary School run through their reading lesson in Spanish, a routine occurrence in the school's bilingual program. The model program enrolls both Anglo and Hispanic students, aims for fluency in English and Spanish.

parents," says Fernandez. "Without them we won't have success."

A full-time community agent helps narrow the gap between school and community. So do a number of special efforts by Fernandez' program, including Spanish classes for Anglo parents and English classes for Hispanic parents.

And the efforts are making a difference.

Hispanic students in the program have shown improvement in English reading and math achievement scores, although Fernandez cautions that it's too early to have definitive results.

He points out that basic achievement levels for each grade have risen, however. And he cites a study of a similar program in Santa Fe, N.M., which showed students in the program scoring significantly higher in reading and math than those not in the program.

"I have no doubt," says the director, "that we're have real effects on the kids."

The parents are more certain.

"It's the greatest thing I've ever seen in education," says Karen Perez, whose daughter just completed first grade.

"I don't see any drawbacks," says Yungen. "And I see a lot of social benefit."

Those benefits, they say, are shared by school and community.

"It's like holding hands with each other," reflected one parent. "Bridging the cultural gap."

Sixth in a Series

June 20, 1981

Teachers key to Indians' progress

By CAROL RUBENSTEIN
Journal Staff Writer

WARM SPRINGS — Even the halls at the elementary school here speak about the juncture of worlds.

A mural of the town of Warm Springs traces its history from the days of volcanoes and dinosaurs through the arrival of white settlers to the present village, a small crossroads that is the urban center of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation.

A poem by Duane Niatum, a student at the school in 1977, hints at some of the dreams:

Now as if drawn by a Simnasho wind,
A juniper sky offering me the last snow lily,
I, too, begin to round dance, modestly.

Oregon schools
Minority report

The mural and poem, both lining a hall at Warm Springs Elementary School, suggest the special challenges it faces.

The school must nurture its students' connections to their tribal past, yet prepare them for new worlds — the white world they will enter in junior high school and the reservation world to which many of them will return.

It's similar to the task of other public schools, but more critical here.

The 370 students at the school (all but a handful are Indian youngsters from the reservation), are the future of the Wasco, Paiute and Warm Springs tribes, the Warm Springs Confederation.

In time, they will become the leaders of this 600,000-acre reservation that stretches from Mount Hood to Mount Jefferson, bordered on the east by the Deschutes River, on the south by part of the Metolius.

It is a preserve encompassing lumber mills and manufacturing plants as well as wild rivers, sagebrush and volcanic wastelands.

One of the nation's most successful reservations, Warms Springs is a $180 million a year corporation, demanding knowledge of everything from the latest management techniques and computer technology to tribal government and old, honored customs.

The foundation for its future is built in the modest cluster of brick buildings, a former Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding school, that now is Warm Springs Elementary School.

That job involves a delicate balance, says Delson Suppah, a Warm Springs Indian who is the school's main link with the community.

"We have to teach the students to be the best possible students they can be," says Suppah, who grew up on the reservation.

"It's like training a horse," he says. "You have to give both rein and direction."

At Warm Springs, that implies a strong emphasis on tribal history and values, coupled with new efforts to boost academic achievement.

And it means preparations for the Madras public schools, where the Indian students shift from being the majority to becoming a 30 percent minority when they are bused in after the sixth grade.

The preparation has to be both social and academic, says Principal Mike Darcy, since there are misunderstandings on both sides of the Deschutes River that separate white and Indian land.

To bridge the understanding gap, Darcy, a Siletz Indian who has been Warm Springs principal for three years, has begun regular half-day exchanges between town and reservation students.

Although only about 20 miles, the distance between Madras and Warm Springs sometimes seems like light-years, Darcy reflects. One group of youngsters, preparing for their first visit to the reservation, asked if Indian children wore clothes.

But there's another gap the school also must close — achievement.

Indian students enter school about a year behind whites in reading readiness and other areas, a gap that is maintained throughout school.

Part of the reason simply is lack of experiences, according to Earlene Anderson, who has taught at the school for 20 years.

"They need to know so many things to understand what they're reading," she explains. "That's not much different from any other children in isolated, rural areas."

This year Warm Springs has switched to the DISTAR reading method to help its students catch up. And DISTAR seems to be doing the job.

"We have no non-readers this year," Pat Kroker, who supervises the special program, says proudly.

Short for "Direct Instruction Systems for Teaching and Remediation," DISTAR relies on a precisely sequenced, highly organized series of drills that breaks reading down to basic building blocks.

The sessions are lively and intense, riveting students' attention.

Constant repetition means the kids "overlearn" the skills, Miss Kroker says, a plus since "the big thing we have to do is work on English.

"Our teachers," she adds, "have very, very high expectations."

The emphasis is not just on reading, however. It's also on student motivation. And for that, Darcy insists, instructional material has to be relevant.

The school uses an Indian reading series developed by the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory in Portland, which recounts many of the tribal legends, for example. And science teachers strive to incorporate Indian notions of man's relationship to the earth.

Classes in Sahaptin, one of the tribal

ROGER JOHNSON/Oregon Journal

WHAT'S THAT WORD? — Lily Ann Suppah's first graders are totally engrossed in their daily reading drill, part of the DISTAR system that is helping boost reading scores at Warm Springs Elementary School. Located on the Warm Springs Reservation, the school has an almost totally Indian student body.

languages, are offered to all students. There also are special activities involving tribal traditions.

There is no question at Warm Springs, as there tends to be among urban Indian children, about what it means to be Indian.

That sense of identity and emphasis on cultural heritage and pride are important, says Delson Suppah, who maintains that self-respect is the basis for school success.

It's a philosophy boosted by Suppah, Darcy and counselor Small Fire Hawk, all strong supporters of the school's new discipline program. Based on psychologist William Glasser's reality therapy, it stresses a student's responsibility for his own behavior as a way of bolstering self-confidence and self-respect.

That shift towards individual student responsibility, they say, will pay off down the line in a reduction in the drop out rate that claims at least half of Indian students before they graduate from high school.

But the single most important factor in student success at Warm Springs, Darcy believes, is the classroom teacher.

"Once that classroom door closes," he says, "you have no control over what goes on."

His strategy has been to work with the best teachers he can find to build a strong education team — a team that puts the children of Warm Springs first.

Four of the school's 17 teachers, in addition to the counselor and liaison, are Indian, which is important because the children need role models, Darcy explains.

But more importantly, he seeks teachers who may be familiar with Indian values and who are sensitive to people with backgrounds other than their own.

"When I've asked teachers if they've ever worked with Indian kids," Darcy sighs, "I've had people say no, but they've worked with blacks or Chicanos."

Not all minorities are alike, he emphasizes. "There are even important cultural differences between Indian tribes."

You simply can't work "by the book" at Warm Springs, says Delson Suppah, offering what seems good advice for any teacher.

"You have to work with the children who are here," building self-awareness and self-esteem, he says.

And building the mutual respect that's necessary for any relationship to prosper.

opinion II

Good education formula is simple

carol rubenstein

A white parent, sitting in on a Portland School District discussion about desegregation, whispered to an acquaintance: "The real problem is that the schools don't want to teach these kids."

A big-city school superintendent, horrified that students weren't learning to read and write before they were graduated from high school, said there is a simple formula for good schools. All it takes, he said, is commitment, accountability and responsibility.

And, he might have added, not making excuses.

Making excuses is, to some extent, what the public schools have been doing for the past 15 years.

Ever since University of Chicago researcher James Coleman's landmark 1966 report on equal educational opportunity, in which he said social class was the most important factor in a child's success, educators have been excusing away the public schools' failure for poor children.

The students, they explain, come from poor homes, broken families. Their parents don't value education. They have poor nutrition, they live in a pathological urban environment. They watch too much TV.

THE DEFENSES are familiar and shopworn. And they don't account for those "maverick" schools in inner-city neighborhoods around the country that turn out successful students.

And so recently educators have begun paying attention to a new vein of research that corroborates what common sense always has said — that education *does* make a difference in people's lives.

The "effective schools" studies, most commonly associated with Harvard University researcher Ronald Edmonds, prove that schools do make a difference, that they can be the means to break the cycle of poverty that traps so many poor people, of whatever ethnic groups.

Coleman's newest report, a study of private and public schools released this year, supports Edmonds' findings. Achievement, Coleman found, follows from specific school policies, not from the students' family backgrounds.

In schools around the country, Edmonds' research and his prescriptions for school improvement are being put to the test.

Both New York City and Milwaukee, Wis., for example, have instituted special programs aimed at boosting achievement in inner-city schools with predominantly minority students. The programs work with a "can do" philosophy and require strict accountability for student learning by administrative and teaching staffs.

For three months this spring, I looked for Oregon schools that did an effective job with the state's minority students — an increasingly visible clientele for public education.

I VISITED five elementary schools — Eliot, Boise and Rice in Portland, Dayton in Yamhill County and Warm Springs in Jefferson County. Each of the schools had significant numbers of black, Asian, Hispanic or Indian students.

What makes schools effective for minority students, I found, makes them effective for any student — regardless of ethnic group or social class.

That's a conclusion worth noting, since some white and middle-class parents worry that efforts to upgrade achievement of poor and minority children will somehow diminish what their children achieve. If schools work for the lowest-achieving students, Edmonds and other researchers note, they will work for the high achievers, too.

There's no one rigid model for an effective school, but those that work share some common characteristics.

Most important, no student in a good school gets lost in the shuffle.

The schools that succeed have high expectations for their students and their staffs.

They take the students where they are academically and work to bring them up to a standard of achievement.

They use flexible approaches to teaching. If something doesn't work, the staff will change it.

There is strong leadership from the principal, an emphasis on instruction, systematic monitoring of each student's progress and a comfortable but not rigid atmosphere.

The schools tend to have strong community support and work with "the whole child" — which often means dealing with the family or stepping in to help with health or other problems when necessary.

And, according to principals at good schools, it means that teachers have to recognize the value of other cultures.

THE SPECIFIC strategies used by the schools may differ, whether reading programs, classroom structures or cultural activities.

But ultimately what unites successful schools is their commitment to make sure that their children learn. They simply do not excuse away student failure.

Vincent Reed, undersecretary for elementary and secondary education at the federal Department of Education, instituted a controversial testing program while he was superintendent of the Washington, D.C., city schools.

All students, beginning at grade 1, had to pass a competency test before they could be promoted to the next grade. The first year of the program, about half of the city's students failed.

That didn't mean the system was abandoned. Rather, Reed ordered mandatory summer school for the failing students, along with regular tutoring sessions to help them make the grade.

He also publicized the test scores and relative ranking of the city's schools because, he said, people have a right to know how well the schools are performing.

That's a procedure that is not universally approved. Portland, for example, no longer compiles a district-wide ranking of school test scores because, officials say, the list just correlates with the schools' socio-economic status.

For Vincent Reed, Ronald Edmonds and the principals at successful schools, the formula for good education is simple.

It is leadership, they say, combined with dedication, commitment and accountability.

WHAT THAT means, simply, is that the debate is over. Teachers can no longer blame a student's failure on the student, his parents or some nebulous laws of nature.

The schools that I visited made it clear that when a teacher believes a child *can* learn, that child *will* learn.

It's not magic. It's not easy. But it works.

Citizens make a contract with their schools. The schools have an obligation to fulfill it.

The Hartford Courant

Hartford, Connecticut

July 12, 1981

STEPHANIE SEVICK

Stephanie Sevick has been education reporter for the *Hartford Courant* since 1978. Sevick's journalistic awards during this period include an Associated Press Award and the New England Press Association Award for Excellence in Journalism.

In pursuing her Journalism Fellowship study of public schools that work in Connecticut, Sevick selected schools in affluent West Hartford and Darien, as well as a more rural, middle class, racially-balanced school with a strong academic record.

Sevick's Fellowship news series focuses on why and how the affluent "gold coast" schools are consistently able to produce leading academic records and the social price their students pay for this achievement. In the integrated middle income schools, Sevick outlines a number of factors that have enabled them to keep their student bodies above state test score averages, while avoiding many of the social pressures and strains affecting the "gold coast" students.

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by Stephanie Sevick

Success in Bolton

Solid Teaching Precepts Reflected in Test Scores

When the results of Connecticut's first statewide proficiency tests were released in 1980, no one was surprised to learn that the school systems of wealthy, sophisticated suburbs like New Canaan, Darien and Farmington scored well.

But many educators were surprised to learn which town achieved the best overall scores. It was Bolton, a semi-rural town of 3,900 14 miles from Hartford, where every ninth-grader passed the writing and reading parts of the test, 98 percent passed the language arts section, and 90 percent passed the math.

"Bolton High School just may be one of the best-kept secrets in public education," state Education Commissioner Mark R. Shedd said of the town's performance.

The proficiency tests are an imprecise measure of a school system's quality — they are designed to test only whether Grade 9 students have mastered minimum basic skills. But at a time when colleges and universities complain that high schools send them students who cannot read and write, a high school in which every student can pass a proficiency test in reading and writing stands out.

Bolton High School stands out in other ways, too.

While some high schools have dropped Latin altogether, 125 of Bolton High School's 220 students were enrolled in Latin courses this spring. While many schools spend thousands of dollars each year cleaning up after vandals, Bolton High School is virtually free of graffiti. And while theft is a chronic problem in many schools, the hallway lockers in Bolton don't even have locks.

And although the Bolton school system spends as much as a third less per pupil than the state's affluent suburbs (Bolton spent $2,149 per pupil in 1980, compared with the state average of $2,200), its high school students perform well above average on college achievement examinations.

In 1980, Bolton seniors averaged 440 (verbal) and 481 (math) on the Scholastic Aptitude Tests, compared with a national average of 424 (verbal) and 466 (math) and a state average of 431 and 466.

Education is taken very seriously in Bolton, a picture postcard town of farmers and commuters where big, white colonial homes with forest-green shutters dot rolling hills patched with fields. A plaque on the green proclaims the town was settled by a group of "good Christian men in 1720."

Its residents have tried hard to protect their small, comfortable town from intrusions — including new neighbors.

"It's just that when I wake up in the morning and pull up the bedroom shade, I don't want to see another house," said Joseph J. Haloburdo Jr., chairman of the Board of Education. Bolton grew very slowly from 1970 to 1980, adding only 260 people.

Beyond the city and its suburban sprawl, Bolton is almost suspended in time. That suspension may help explain why Bolton has one of the most effective high schools in Connecticut, because much of what happens at the school is characteristic of most high schools of 30 years ago.

TREAT YOURSELF
TO THE BEST: LATIN!

COURANT PHOTO BY STEPHEN DUNN

COURANT PHOTO BY JERRY WILLIAMS

COURANT PHOTO BY JERRY WILLIAMS

Academic purpose isn't diluted by the friendliness and informality evident at Bolton High School as, clockwise from top left, Sue Murray addresses her Latin class and Principal Joe Fleming talks with a student. Sitting on the floor of the girls' washroom, Ruki Sattar relaxes. Later, she talks with Sue Frantz, center, and Karen Morrone, right.

Concern, Stability, Purpose Guide Bolton High School

Bolton High School, for instance, never followed the trend of the 1960s and 1970s, when most school systems de-emphasized the basic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics. In Bolton, students continued to perform old-fashioned grammar drills and to diagram sentences.

The school also never succumbed to the tide of democracy that swept through many schools, giving teachers, parents and students a greater voice at the expense of the principal's authority.

It is not unusual for Joe Fleming, a tough-talking Irishman from Boston's North Shore who is Bolton High School's principal, to stand in the hallways to catch and reprimand students who are late for class.

It is unusual to find Fleming at his desk. At noon each day, he is likely to be in the school's makeshift cafeteria (there is no kitchen, and two empty classrooms are used as a dining area), eating lunch with students.

Fleming eats with students because "these kids have to see me," he says. "They have to know I'm real. They have to know they cannot lie to me."

But his hard-nosed discipline masks a deep affection.

"We want these kids to be able to read, write and speak properly," he says. "Every teacher here is an English teacher.

"Not only do we guarantee a diploma to these kids — a diploma that has meaning — but we guarantee them that this is their school."

Fleming's tough leadership has won him the respect of both students and teachers.

"We can trust him," 18-year-old Ruki Sattar said. "I mean, you just got to trust a guy who shows up on Halloween in a Frank Perdue chicken outfit."

Teachers say Fleming makes their job easier by running the school tightly. The non-threatening, supportive atmosphere at Bolton High School appears to be a major attraction for teachers, who rarely leave for other jobs.

Salary, certainly, is not what keeps them there. The school's 20 teachers, until very recently, were among the lowest paid in the state. Although a teacher with 15 years' experience and advanced degrees can earn nearly $19,000 a year, starting pay is only $10,279, and the mean salary for teachers is $13,268. That compares with a statewide mean of $15,482, according to the state Department of Education.

"I would like to see them paid more," Fleming said. "These people don't stay here for the money, and all of them are certainly competitive.

"I think they stay at Bolton because there are few overt discipline problems. I'm not saying we don't have discipline problems, but they are not of the nature that comes when you have streetwise or sophisticated kids."

In the almost closet-sized faculty lounge, teachers talk of students in positive ways.

"Oh, these kids are not sophisticated at all," art teacher Marion Nicolay said. "Some of them have never even been to Hartford, but I wouldn't trade that."

There is a strong camaraderie among Bolton's faculty members, who often go with Fleming to a Manchester pub on Fridays for a "Tea and Literature Hour." No tea is served and no literature discussed, but "we know each other very well here," English teacher Joan Hopper said with a smile.

"We've worked hard to do right by Bolton," said David Gibbon, an English teacher at the school for 11 years. "We want to provide the finest education they can get. There is a strong feeling of pride and deep dedication in this school. The students realize this."

Several students said they were no different from other American high school students.

"Sure we use drugs and alcohol, but we just don't do it in school," said a tall sophomore wearing a black T-shirt with "Grateful Dead" spelled across the front in glitter. "Partying is for the weekends at the Lake House."

"These kids are no better than any others, but the difference is we have control here," guidance counselor June S. Krisch said. This control, school officials say, is responsible for Bolton's academic success.

Joanne B. Levy, guidance counselor for Grades 5-8, points out that "in measuring academic achievement, one must not overlook class activities, teacher-student relationships and teacher-parent communications."

Bolton officials say there is a great deal of communication between teachers and students because the school is small. In Bolton, the ratio of teachers to students is 1-to-11, compared with the statewide average of 1-to-17, state Department of Education figures show.

Superintendent Raymond A. Allen Jr. believes the students have opportunities they would not have in larger schools. "If a kid wants to play a sport, he can," Allen said. "It doesn't matter how good the student is at the sport. He is welcomed."

Kim Columbia, a 16-year-old honor student, said, "Because the classes are small, if you have a problem the teacher will stop in the middle of class to explain. But if you are having a problem and you are one of 40 kids in a class in some other school, that's too bad because you'd probably have to wait after school for extra help."

The smallness can also be a drawback, however.

"Everyone knows everything about everbody," said dark-eyed Andrea Loalbo, a 15-year-old sophomore.

Her girlfriend, Chris Russell, agreed. "If you have a new top on, the whole school knows by 8:30 in the morning. They know how much you paid for it and where you bought it. Sometimes this smallness is a pain."

"One disadvantage is we have a few kids who would really profit from some advanced college-level courses," said a teacher who did not want to be identified. "We can't give them. There are not enough students to form an advanced class."

In recent years, Bolton residents have discussed closing the high school because of its small enrollment. But in a 1979 survey conducted by consultants from the University of Connecticut, 240 of the 320 people surveyed favored keeping the school open.

"I really hope they don't close this school," Loalbo said. "I went to St. James (a parochial school) in Manchester for a half year in seventh grade.

"Everyone at St. James thought they were so ahead of the other schools. But you know what? When I raised my hand to ask a question in that school, the teachers always made me feel like I wasn't paying attention. I'm just glad I'm here now."

Second in a Series

July 13, 1981

Striving for the American Dream

Students Driven to Succeed

By STEPHANIE SEVICK
Courant Education Writer

The four students crouching behind a car in the visitors' parking lot of Hall High School in West Hartford were getting ready to take a test.

But no textbooks were open, and none of the students was studying notes. They were passing around a marijuana cigarette.

"We're mellowing out," said one student.

"Relaxing so we can do well on the test," said another. "We have to get a good grade."

Nearly 70 miles away at Westport's Staples High School, five young men were taking a calculus quiz. They squirmed in their chairs as the teacher walked around the room surveying the students' progress.

The five students' heads bobbed up and down as they glanced from the test to the teacher, waiting for him to turn his back. He did, and the five cheated by exchanging test papers. They, too, had to get good grades.

Not all the students at Hall High School use drugs before tests, nor do all those at Staples cheat. But what happens at these schools to make some students resort to drugs and cheating is precisely what makes them good schools.

Parents, schools, and students in wealthy West Hartford and Westport have a common goal: continuing the American dream. However they define that dream — and for many in these towns it is their upper-middle-class world of country clubs and Mercedes — they are convinced it requires one certificate: a college degree.

Parents consequently demand a lot from their schools, and Hall and Staples high schools, in turn, expect a lot from their students. The students willingly buckle down, because they know that being accepted by the right college — a Harvard or Bryn Mawr — is just as important as eventually earning a degree.

When fathers with Ivy League degrees hold positions as vice presidents of Fortune 500 corporations, they do not think it unreasonable to demand their children do at least as well.

Westport and West Hartford residents have backed up their high expectations of public education with a strong financial commitment. In Connecticut, the two towns ranked first and second, respectively, in per-pupil spending in 1979-80, the latest year for which state Department of Education figures are available. Westport spent $3,152 per pupil and West Hartford $2,916, compared with a statewide average of $2,200.

Whether this spending buys Staples and Hall students higher college board scores is debatable. But the students, on the whole, do score significantly higher than the state and national averages on the Scholastic Aptitude Test — in 1980 Staples students averaged 477 on the verbal part of the test and 494 on the math, while West Hartford students (at Hall and the town's other high school, Conard) averaged 447 on verbal and 498 on math.

The statewide average was 431 on verbal and 466 on math, while the national average was 424 on verbal and 466 on math. The scoring range on both tests is 200 to 800.

The high expectations placed on the 1,600 students at Hall and the 1,400 students at Staples have created fierce, almost back-stabbing competition. This highly competitive climate is started in the homes, fostered by the schools and perpetuated by the students themselves.

Debbie Packman, who graduated from Hall in June, is typical of many of the students at Hall and Staples. A bright, energetic 17-year-old, she shows all the signs of success.

She comes from a comfortable West Hartford home, where books and magazines are plentiful and where the television set is rarely on. Her father, Allan, is a research engineer with the

COURANT PHOTO BY JOHN LONG

Debra Packman, left, a college-bound senior at Hall High School in West Hartford, walks to class with friend Renah Feldman. Packman, a member of the school's honor society, captain of the cheerleading squad and the daughter of a research engineer and a mother who attended two years of college, is typical of the highly motivated students who make Hall classes competitive and the students' performance on standardized tests well above national averages.

Pratt & Whitney Aircraft Group. He is working on his doctorate and is an adjunct faculty member at the University of Hartford. Her mother, Judy, is a homemaker who completed two years of college.

This spring, Debbie was a member of the honor society, captain of the cheerleading squad and popular. The door of her locker was covered with memorabilia from her four years at Hall — a photograph of the cheerleading squad in a pyramid formation, a picture of her and her date at the senior prom and the needless word "diet."

But overshadowing all the mementos were two words clipped from a magazine — "college" and "success." The words were more than just the goals of the smiling senior; they symbolized what Hall and Staples high schools are all about.

College was not a goal Debbie set for herself in high school. It was set for her by her parents when she walked into kindergarten. "From the moment Debbie entered school, we knew she would go to college," her mother said.

In the Packman's kitchen, covered with floral wallpaper, Judy Packman,

Fierce Competition Drives Students at Hall, Staples

a slim woman with neatly styled brown hair and carefully manicured nails, spoke candidly of her daughter.

"You just have to be on top of school. Debbie just didn't become a good student like that. We worked hard at it. We established a homework routine in grade school, at age 6. So by the time she reached 17, she knows she's got homework and it has to be done," she said.

Debbie has gotten As and Bs on her report cards for as long as she and her mother can remember. Only once did Debbie get a C, in a junior high mathematics class. "Debbie quickly took care of that," her mother said.

"Look, my daughter isn't perfect," Packman said. "She is a typical teenager. She gets punished for things, but she always aims for the top. Her motivation is intense, but then again so is mine.

"You only do as well as the competition around you. The environment plays a big part in education. If we lived somewhere else, and Debbie was as highly motivated as she is, we wouldn't get the same results. That's why we and lots of other people moved to West Hartford, because of schools."

Debbie will attend Union College in Schenectady, N.Y., in September.

Peter D. Relic, West Hartford's superintendent of schools, believes the support of parents like Debbie's is important to the system's success.

An undersecretary in the U.S. Department of Education when West Hartford chose him as superintendent of schools in July 1980, Relic said effective schools have four components: the student, the teacher, the parents and the principal. He calls them "learning, teaching, support and leadership."

"Teachers teach skills and knowledge. Yes, they teach values and attitudes like courtesy, honesty and cleanliness," he told parents and teachers at a PTO meeting at Morley Elementary School one night in March. "These values reflect the attitude of the community."

"It's nice to have children coming from homes where there are books and magazines around and a sensible amount of time for television, but parents do not have to be highly educated," he said. "A literate parent with commitment goes a long way. The parent has to know what's going on in the school. We have to know what's going on in the home."

As Debbie Packman walked down the corridors of Hall High School, with her sparkling brown eyes and a magazine-cover smile, her face showed a slight strain.

"Hey, what did you get on Trecker's test?" a student shouted to her.

"B," Debbie shouted back as she cracked her gum.

"Too bad," said the student in a sarcastic tone. "I got an A."

A look of disappointment came over Debbie's face. Hall students are not satisfied with Cs and Bs on tests. As are considered the decent grade.

"A 'C' in this school is really an F," a freshman said.

It is the race for grades that motivated Debbie Packman and 15 classmates to sit through 45 minutes of an advanced honors calculus class at 7:45 in the morning without yawning.

As calculus teacher Marion Fisher drew triangles and wrote equations on the board, members of the class watched intently. There was no talking and no staring out the window.

There was only one interruption — when a junior said she did not understand how the teacher arrived at an answer. Fisher waited while a classmate turned to the perplexed student's desk and jotted numbers on a piece of paper to show how the other students got the correct answer.

"I get it, I get it," said the junior. The class continued until the bell rang.

Out of the 45 minutes of class time, the students paid attention 41 minutes. The four minutes not spent on instruction were used by the students to open and close notebooks and to leave their seats for the next class.

The efficient use of time in Packman's math class, made possible by its students' strong sense of purpose, is one of the characteristics that helps make Hall an effective school.

It also attracts teachers who want to be free to teach.

Hall, nicknamed the "Taj Mahal" by West Hartford residents, is a school at which teachers strive to get jobs. Besides its highly motivated students, it has excellent salary levels by Connecticut standards (a teacher with a doctorate and 10 years of experience is paid $21,100), there are few discipline problems and the sprawling brick building holds a wealth of teaching materials.

"When I tell a teacher from another district that I work at Hall . . . well, it's like reaching nirvana," a Hall science teacher said. "Consequently, to leave Hall, for whatever reason, is considered failure."

Westport's Staples faculty, paid similar salaries, is considered even more prestigious. And the Board of Education has worked to earn that reputation: Until the number of faculty openings at Staples fell sharply in recent years, the school board annually dispatched a special committee on a nationwide search for teachers.

As a result, Westport's faculty has credentials comparable to the faculties at elite private schools such as Hotchkiss and Choate. "You will not find a teacher here who has graduated from the University of Bridgeport," said Jerry Kuroghlian, an English teacher at Staples.

The facilities and programs at the schools are lavish for both teachers and students.

A Hall freshman interested in athletics will find 32 teams in 21 sports that range from football to gymnastics and lacrosse.

If a student is musically inclined, Hall has 11 performing groups. The orchestra, band and choral groups do more than just put on shows at Christmas and spring festivals — the Concert Jazz Band and Choir have toured Europe, and the jazz band has cut its own record.

Hall's library has 24,000 books, subscriptions to 102 periodicals, 5,500 films, video and audio tapes, posters, and games in five languages.

The school also has a supply of media hardware and software such as computer terminals, video-taping components, and a closed-circuit TV system that makes possible such things as "Update," a student-produced news program shown during homeroom once a week.

And Hall may have fewer facilities than Staples. Staples recently underwent a $14 million renovation project that joined its nine buildings, which were built in 1965 in a California college-campus style. Students and teachers had complained they were isolated in the separate buildings and Connecticut winters made traveling between buildings inconvenient.

The renovation also included a new fieldhouse, which has a one-acre gymnasium with a half-inch poured rubber floor, and a 25-meter by 45-foot pool that costs $67,000 a school year to maintain, according to Bob Yovan, aquatics director. Altogether, the school has 300,000 square feet — 7½ acres — of floor space.

Staples' library has a collection of 40,000 books, more than 100 magazine subscriptions and a microfiche collection of The New York Times dating from 1864. Microfiche is a sheet of microfilm, usually 4-by-6 inches, that preserves pages in a reduced form.

Staples students can choose from more than 230 courses in fields such as continental cooking, women in literature, matrix algebra and anthropology.

The school boasts that it offers students broadcasting experience in the school's own television studio and radio stations and dozens of programs in theater and art.

The abundant materials and programs, however, can add to the pressures the students feel at both schools.

"We feel compelled to do well here," said 15-year-old Bitsy Kiester of Staples. "People in Westport say that others don't have what we have, and they hold it over our heads."

"Everyone thinks we are snobs, so we might as well be snobs," said 16-year-old Allyson Armbrust of Staples.

"There is a feeling or an attitude that "we're from Westport so anyone else is second-class,"' Staples headmaster Lee Littrell said. "It's the Gold Coast syndrome."

"I think sometimes that we are so busy telling everyone how good we are, that 'We are Hall High,' (the school's slogan) that before you know it, everyone believes it. Whether it is true or not, I don't know," said a Hall teacher who did not want to be identified.

There is a flip side to the intense competitiveness at Hall and Staples. For some students, the goals their parents and schools have set for them may seem so high as to be nearly unreachable.

"These 16-year-olds look at their successful fathers and fear that they will not measure up to their success," said Littrell. "Their fathers are not gentle men. They got to the positions they have by being aggressive. . . . The students are fearful of their ability to make it."

"I do not have the same endurance and drive as my father," said 16-year-old Denise Fournier, the daughter of a businessman. "That makes me frightened."

The intense pressure to perform has created a group of students called "academic burnouts" — students who have good academic ability, but are poorly motivated.

Hall High School has recognized the problem and set up a special program, Alternative Search for Knowledge — ASK.

"Grades are very important here. There is a lot of social pressure for good grades. These kids are poorly motivated because of the competition. They've lost their drive," said program teacher Jim Solomon. "The problem is created by Hall itself. There are so many opportunities, plenty of good resources and a fine building. That's the problem — it's all here."

ASK combines the academic disciplines of social studies and English for juniors and seniors who have high IQ's but have grade-point averages placing them in the bottom half of their class. They must have their parents' permission to be in the program.

"It's a concern for the future in a pragmatic way. This program helps build a positive self-image," said Larry Price, the program's other teacher. "These kids are like the empty faces walking on the streets of New York City."

Third in a Series

July 14, 1981

Teaching Ailing Schools ABCs of Success

By STEPHANIE SEVICK
Courant Education Writer

Ronald Edmonds had just ordered an extra-dry martini when a school superintendent cornered him in the lounge of the North Haven Ramada Inn, where Edmonds had spoken earlier to a conference of educators.

"I need help," pleaded the man, who ran the school system in a shoreline suburb. He had budget problems and discipline hassles, students who worked only hard enough to get by, an aging, worn-down faculty, principals buried by paper work and a community that didn't seem to care.

Edmonds had heard the same complaint from hundreds of school administrators: American public education wasn't working. He fished the lemon peel out of his drink, looked up at the superintendent and said, "I don't have all the answers."

Perhaps. But in a profession notoriously prone to fads, Edmonds is the latest guru for American educators. Although the polished professor from the Harvard Graduate School of Education declines to promise miracles, he readily shares his theory of how public schools can again become effective places of learning.

If Edmonds' theory sounds familiar — like "back to basics" with a Harvard accent — that may just make it more attractive to educators who are grasping desperately for a way to stop the academic decline in their classrooms. Public schools are under heavy attack, and when an Ivy League researcher agrees with angry parents and taxpayers that rote learning, lots of homework and strict discipline are what schools need, hard-pressed educators listen.

Edmonds, however, must turn around 15 years of educational theorizing to claim victory for his views.

Latest Guru for Educators Doesn't Promise Miracles

Since 1966, when sociologist and educator James S. Coleman released his landmark report, "Equality of Education Opportunity," most educators have believed that a pupil's family background is the critical factor in determining his academic success.

Coleman's federally funded report, which argued that "Negro schools are inferior to those attended largely by whites," became the justification for widespread school desegregation and busing for the purpose of integration. But a secondary conclusion assumed greater importance over time: Middle-class white pupils, Coleman had said, would not be adversely affected by busing because the critical factor in their academic success was their family life, not their school.

The conclusion many people drew from the report was that inner-city blacks were similarly affected by environment. But in their case, their poverty-stricken lives seemed to promise failure.

Edmonds sharply disagrees. His Effective Schools theory, as it is called, claims that any school, structured as Edmonds recommends, can teach any child — even a poor one from the inner-city — the minimum basic skills that middle-class parents expect of their children.

Edmonds' theory is based on research he began at Harvard in the early 1970s to answer one question: Is a pupil's academic performance determined by family background or the school itself?

His method was to study those rare inner-city schools where pupils managed to learn despite debilitating home environments and chronic staff and material shortages. What distinguished those schools from other, less-successful ones, he found, were:

- Clearly stated goals.
- Strong leadership.
- Discipline and order.
- Regular testing to measure pupils' progress.
- High expectations.

When those five factors were present in a school, he believed, pupils mastered basic skills, regardless of their family backgrounds.

Edmonds, who won his reputation by applying his findings to New York City's beleaguered public school system, admits he doesn't know "if the five characteristics are the cause or the results of good schools.

"It really doesn't matter," he says. What matters is whether children are learning.

Many parents, angry at public school systems that produce graduates who can't read job applications or balance checkbooks, would agree.

Edmonds began publishing his research in 1975. In the summer of 1978 he was invited to become senior assistant to Frank Macchiarola, New York City's chancellor of public education.

The city's public school system, which enrolls nearly 1 million children taught by 60,000 teachers in 1,200 schools, was "on the margin of institutional disaster," Edmonds told the Education Writers Conference in New York this spring.

Edmonds sent experts trained in his work into schools to see where they were lacking. If, for instance, they found a principal who was not a strong "instructional leader," one who sat in an office rather than regularly visiting classrooms and critiquing teacher and student behavior — a staff person would be assigned to help the principal change his ways.

The improvement program was reinforced by a new, standardized curriculum for all city schools, which gave administrators an accurate means of measuring pupils' progress. New rules also were established for promoting and transferring pupils.

The goal was to eliminate social promotions, the practice of promoting pupils with failing grades rather than keeping them in classes with children two or three years younger.

The program worked. Reading scores have risen consistently, and this year, for the first time, a majority of New York City pupils were reading at grade level. Also, for the first time, one in five Grade 7 students was kept back for failing to meet expected reading levels.

Edmonds' success in New York attracted the attention of school administrators across the nation. Within a year, Milwaukee, St. Louis, Lansing, Mich., and New Haven were establishing Effective Schools programs, many of them with the help of educators who had studied under Edmonds.

RONALD EDMONDS

JAMES COLEMAN

New Haven has been working on a school-improvement plan the last three years, combining Edmonds' theory and the work of Dr. James P. Comer, a professor of psychiatry at the Yale Child Study Clinic who has been working in New Haven public schools since 1968.

Connecticut's Department of Education included much of Edmonds' theory in 1980 in its first Comprehensive Plan for Education, a five-year program charting the future of public education. The state is now identifying schools that would benefit from the Effective Schools approach.

Edmonds' ideas have not made a clean sweep of the educational world, however, even though a new study released this spring by Coleman, his adversary, appears to reinforce his views.

Coleman's latest study, "Public and Private Schools," caused a furor in public education by concluding that students in private high schools learn more than those in public high schools.

Educators have predicted the study will cause a mass exodus to private schools. Its conclusions also have fueled a political campaign to give tax credits to parents who send their children to private schools.

"Public and Private Schools" attributes the success of private schools, and particularly parochial schools, to their firmer discipline and structure and higher academic demands.

Coleman found that students in private and parochial schools had more homework, cut fewer classes and had fewer discipline problems than public school students. Teachers' interest in the students also was higher at private schools.

"In general, (private schools had) a more orderly environment," Coleman said.

The study, which examined 58,728 students in 1,016 public and private high schools, also found private and parochial school students had higher aspirations and expectations than public school students from similar backgrounds.

Discipline, structure and high expectations also happen to be factors Edmonds has identified as the key to effective schools. But although Coleman appears to have shifted sharply from his earlier theories and moved nearer Edmonds', he remains adamant that the family is the great influence on a child's education. He insists that his new study does not endorse Edmonds.

"He is a charlatan," Coleman said of Edmonds recently as he lit an after-lunch cigar in the exclusive Quadrangle Club on the University of Chicago campus, where he teaches. "Edmonds is no researcher. He makes the statement that the home is not important. He has overstated his case."

"One distinct advantage the private schools have is there is a lot of family reinforcement of education," Coleman said. "Clearly, it is the families' involvement with education that makes the difference, more than the school itself. The parents reinforce the schools' demands."

Coleman acknowledges that parents send their children to private schools for a variety of reasons.

"A lot of times it is because the public schools are not doing well," he said. "Then, because the parent has made the choice — to put their child in private school — it becomes the choice (itself) that gives these parents an added edge (over public schools).

Coleman's findings already have begun to be scrutinized and debated, and undoubtedly will produce more research studies. He knows he is a powerful man.

"You always hear complaints by researchers that no one uses their work," Coleman said. "You really have to suspect yourself if you don't make someone a little angry. I think that's why my research is used — and irritating."

Sun-Sentinel

Fort Lauderdale, Florida

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First in a Series

Education of the gifted: A challenge for Florida

PATRICIA SULLIVAN

Patricia Sullivan, who holds a Bachelor's degree in journalism from Marquette University, has been education writer for Fort Lauderdale's *Sun-Sentinel* since 1979.

For her Fellowship study of education of gifted and talented students, Sullivan sought to find out whether gifted and talented education is a gift to the economic upperclass. She started her research on the premise that while three to five percent of the public school enrollment qualifies as gifted, that group of students is a homogeneous lot. Could it be that the public school system, in an attempt to prove its program can compete in quality with expensive, elite, private schools, has created a private school within a public school system?

The study was conducted from the student viewpoint. The rationale: students are the ones who see the programs for what they are; they are the ones who develop the problems; and they are the ones who have to deal with the ambivalent emotions which come from having superior abilities in a mediocre world.

Sullivan found that, although Florida is considered a leader in gifted and talented education, problems remain. There were difficulties in identifying the gifted, particularly among minorities, the tendency being to define only "whiz kids" as gifted. While some programs proved productive, other classes were little more than study halls. The study also showed that there was little follow-up or evaluation of programs, and few people had any idea of what happens to gifted students when they leave high school.

By Patricia Sullivan
Education Writer

The gifted are different.

Their intellect shines like a beacon of light over a sea of flickering candles. In a nation worried about the literacy of its youth, the gifted not only can read, but they also can think.

The gifted learn differently.

They learn faster and seem to leap over formulas, never needing the step-by-step rules and arithmetic drills that the rest of their classmates use to understand new theories.

"These kids have grasshopper minds," said one amazed Sarasota principal.

The Gifted:
A class of their own

The gifted are different from you and me. They're smarter. And that's their biggest problem.

Gifted students in Florida must have an intelligence quotient of at least 130 (the "normal" IQ is 100). Fewer than two out of every 100 public school students in the state qualify. Some of those gifted students have such high IQs that they shoot off the top of the scale and at that level, the label "genius" doesn't do them justice.

The state's school districts may not be doing them justice, either, say some supporters of gifted education, because how good a gifted program is depends to a large extent upon where you live and who you are.

Florida, even though it is considered a leader in gifted education, has its problems:

- It has gifted programs that soar and others that are little more than study halls.
- It has difficulty finding and identifying any student as gifted and it has major problems finding minority gifted students.
- It defines only academic whiz kids as gifted students.
- It has no idea what happens to gifted students when they leave high school.

Why should the public care about these extraordinarily bright children? Supporters of gifted education say if schools don't challenge the best of the class, the world may be robbed of its most innovative thinkers — and ideas — of the future.

Counselor Gregg Huddlestone of Fort Lauderdale's Walker Elementary School, said it's tough to predict what will happen if these students are not challenged in class.

Staff photo by Walter Michot

Gifted pupils delve into the world of science at Cooper City Elementary School.

"There are some kids who will just sit back and do the required amount of work and no one will ever know (their potential). There are others who will turn into behavior problems because they're bored. Others will seek out work. There is just no pattern — it depends on the individual and the home environment," he said.

Psychologists and counselors in South Florida, as well as national experts on the gifted, agree there is insufficient evidence to say whether gifted kids suffer any emotional difficulty if they are not challenged.

Most people don't realize gifted students have their own special problems.

"You understand how a handicapped person would have problems, but nobody understands why a gifted student would have problems," said Ellen Bryant, director of exceptional education in Gadsden County in north Florida. "The feeling is 'You have it made, kid.' But people don't realize gifted students are as far away from the mean as the retarded child."

For those who believe the public education system ought to motivate and serve all the students, there is room for special programs for slow learners and gifted students. Gifted education is but one end of the intellectual spectrum.

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The gifted are as different from each other as a Volkswagen from a Porsche — even though they are both small cars, there's a world of difference in performance.

Jerry Parrish, a Miami 17-year-old who never has taken a computer class in school, spends almost every after-school hour developing a computerized data entry system for cardiac patients at the mammoth Jackson Memorial Hospital.

"My high school sure doesn't have a computer like this. I'm working on stuff most college students don't get to do," said the personable scientist.

Bobby, a Sarasota fifth-grader, carries a violin and practices on his lunch break beneath the trees.

"I finished Mozart last year," he said somberly.

Search out the gifted students in Florida and you'll find them in the turn-of-the-century Tampa Free Library building radios in an old bookloft; tagging sharks in the humid, salt-soaked air of Key Biscayne; researching the history of black schools of Jacksonville; and learning chess in Palm Beach from the man who used to instruct world chess champion Bobby Fischer.

You'll also find them in regular classrooms, perhaps excelling, perhaps not. They may be among the bored, the "troublemakers" who are tired of the basic skills drills. They might be helping other students figure out the mysteries of multiplication or Charlemagne or pulleys.

The gifted are different in how they are seen by the world.

"I grew up in an atmosphere where we used to turn on the radio and listen to the Quiz Kids," said Dorothy Sisk, former director of the federal Office of Gifted and Talented. "I thought those kids knew more than any kid ought to know."

The students have heard that kind of attitude before. The only way to deal with it is to ignore it, they said.

"It doesn't come from your friends, it comes from your enemies," said Kristi Gladstone, a fifth-grader at Cooper City Elementary School. "They think you're smart, but you know you're just intelligent."

"Everybody calls you names, like 'brain' and 'smarty'. They think you have ESP," said classmate Tom Ievoli a fifth-grader from Cooper City Elementary School.

Gifted students don't have to have extrasensory perception, but they have to meet three other qualifications to be considered gifted in Florida. They must score two deviations above the mean on a standard intelligence test (essentially, an IQ score of about 130); they must have most of the characteristics which researchers attribute to gifted children (such as early reading and intense curiosity); and they must show a need for a special program.

In Florida, the gifted are the academically gifted. They are not:

- The musically or artistically talented, although they might have those talents, too.
- The creative, although they might create.
- The achievers and conformists, although they might score straight A's and follow rules easily.
- The leaders, although they might lead.

Although Florida is considered a leader in gifted education, some school officials across the state say it's a leader by default.

"You can be a leader and still be conservative," said Dr. Sisk. She considers the state's definition of who is gifted conservative. The federal government talks about the gifted and talented and includes all those categories listed above that Florida ignores.

The state consultant to the gifted defends Florida's reputation.

Parents can seek evaluation of ability

Parents who believe their child is gifted can request an appraisal by their school district under state law.

The procedure is similar in both Broward and Palm Beach counties. The first step is for parents to contact the principal of the public school where the child is assigned.

School officials will check the student's previous test records, ask for referrals from teachers who have taught the child and schedule an intelligence quotient or IQ test.

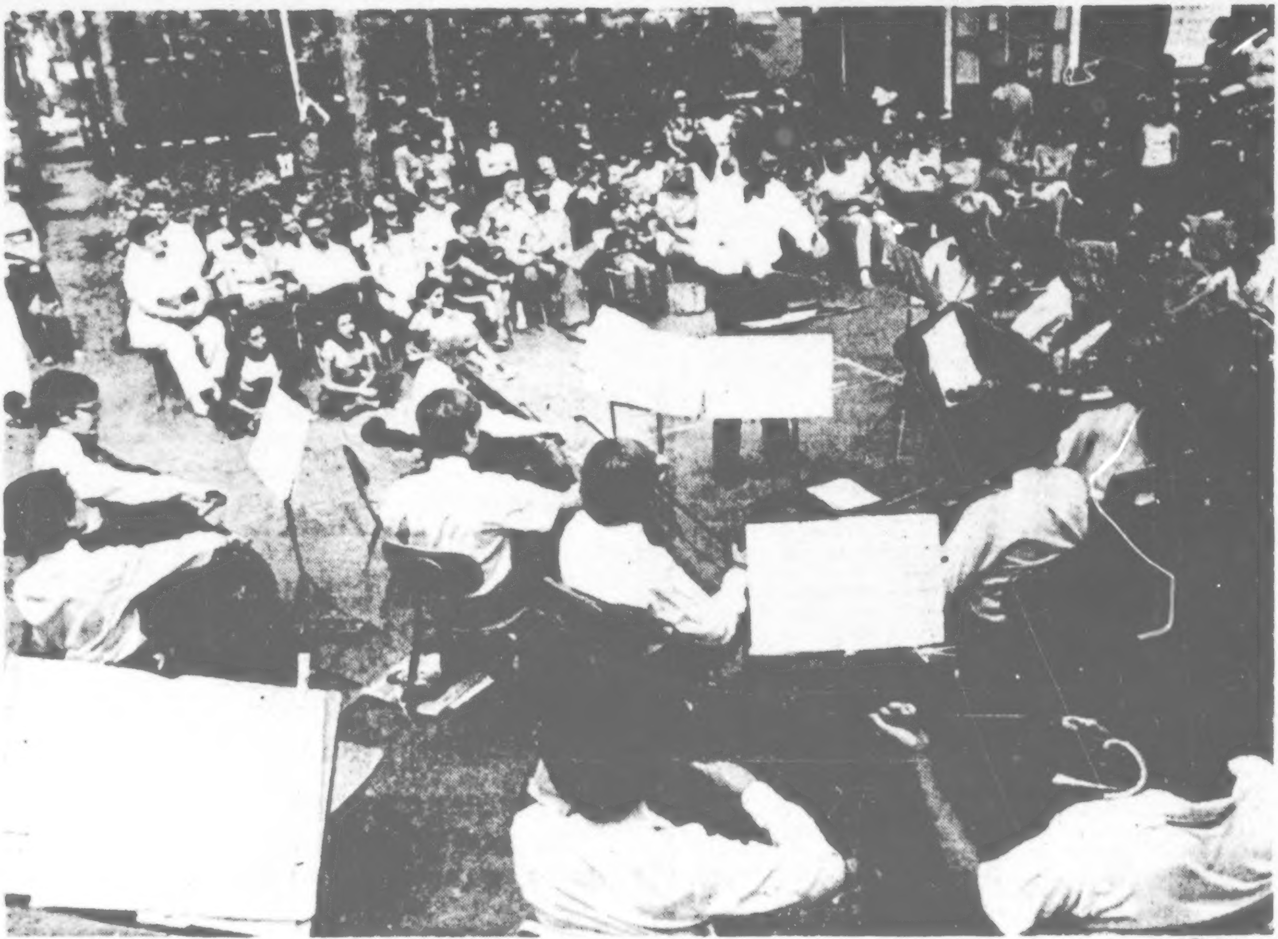
The principal will tell the school psychologist what priority to place on the test for each child, school officials in both counties say. The wait can range from one to six months.

Most of the time teachers suggest a child be tested for the gifted programs, but parents and even the student have a right to ask for the testing, state officials say.

Ethnic Breakdown of Gifted Students

Dept of Education statistics Oct 1980	White Non-Hispanic	Black Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Amer. Indian/ Alaskan Native	Total
Broward	3,693	143	56	39	2	3,933
Palm Beach	1,278	47	12	25	—	1,362
Dade	1,850	116	213	71	—	2,250
Duval	1,683	67	5	31	—	1,786
Gadsden	54	18	—	—	—	72
Hillsborough	1,758	74	42	17	—	1,891
Leon	456	40	3	13	1	513
Orange	2,194	55	13	19	—	2,281
Pinellas	2,407	90	5	19	—	2,521
Sarasota	510	3	5	15	1	534
State Totals	26,406	914	410	383	13	28,126
	(93.88%)	(3.3%)	(1.46%)	(1.36%)	(.05%)	(100%)

Number of gifted students identified as gifted in 10 of Florida's 67 counties.



UPI photo

A student orchestra plays during a fair at the Pineview School in Sarasota, the only all-gifted school in Florida.

"The position of the Department of Education was to identify one category at a time, so we went with the group easiest to identify," said consultant Joyce Runyon.

The gifted are different all right. They constitute only 3 to 5 percent of all the students in the nation, federal officials estimate. But that's about 2.5 million students nationwide. At last count, Florida found 28,126 in this state. Broward County has identified 3,933; Palm Beach County has identified 1,363.

State law, passed in 1975, says all students identified as gifted must have "an appropriate program of special instruction." That appropriate program differs from county to county and from school to school — from a special, all-gifted school in Sarasota to a roving van in Martin County to daily special classes in Chattahoochee.

The state spent about $18.5 million for gifted programs last year and that's the third highest expenditure in the country, behind Pennsylvania and California. But the gifted program is a part-time program in Florida — schools are reimbursed for the cost of 12 hours of instruction.

Florida spent about the same amount of money on the gifted, according to latest figures available, as it did on students in full-time emotionally handicapped classes. However, there were five times as many gifted kids.

Out of Florida's total expenditure of about $240 million for special education, gifted programs received about 13 percent.

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Teachers will have to be specially certified to instruct gifted students starting with the 1982-83 school year the Legislature decided last year. Parents and administrators see that as a major step forward for gifted education.

"I don't understand how you could teach them without understanding what a gifted child is," said Camille Barnett, a Broward County teacher of the gifted who has gone through the special training.

But some people challenge the assumption that there is such a category as "the gifted child." Some parents and professionals believe that labeling students "gifted" is elitist, unnecessary and damages the gifted child, as well as the average and above average child who are made to feel failures.

"They become prestige programs. Parents want their kids in there whether the kids are gifted or not," said Robert Weiland, director of psychological services for the Broward County School District.

Social labels create their own reality, argue David G. Myers and Jack Ridl, Hope College professors in Holland, Mich. If only 3 to 5 percent of the students are gifted, that "implies that at least 95 percent of our children are not gifted and talented, a false and pernicious assumption," they write.

"To the Yanomamo Indians of South America, giftedness is possession of the skills of a great hunter and warrior. To parapsychologists, it is psychic ability. To Suzuki violin teachers, it is musical talent. In middle-class America, one finds almost as many definitions of giftedness as articles on it," Myers and Ridl said.

No one can prove it, but teachers also say when gifted students get bored by the material and pace of classes, they drop out.

"There's a strong correlation between giftedness and emotional problems," said Rosemary Timoney, director of gifted programs at Northeast High School in Fort Lauderdale. "I personally get very depressed over the high number of non-achieving gifted students. A few have failing grades. A few have the C to D range. They could be soaring, but there almost seems like a safety valve that says, 'I will not do it.' "

The charges of elitism are not so easily dealt with. Statistics from the state Department of Education show that only 3.3 percent of Florida's gifted students are black, even though blacks comprise 23 percent of all K-12 students in Florida. Hispanics do a little better, but they, too, are underrepresented — 1.5 percent of gifted students are Hispanic, although they make up 6.6 percent of the student population.

There are ways to find more minority students without lowering state standards. The use of an alternative test, the System of Multi-phasic Personality Assessment, known as SOMPA, is becoming more popular because educators say it is less culturally biased than standard intelligence tests. But the SOMPA is expensive and takes a long time to adminster because it requires several interviews at the student's home and with his teachers.

Elitism is condoned in some areas, others point out.

"It's OK to separate athletes . . . but there seems to be a stigma attached to intellectual ability and growth," said Frances Quinto, consultant to the National Education Association.

But while a star athlete can start out in the peewee leagues and move up through organized sports as he goes through school, it is impossible in many of Florida's 67 county school districts to attend gifted classes from kindergarten through 12th grade.

The future of gifted education in the state may well depend on its costs as more students are identified and more programs start. The federal government, which has played only a minimal role in funding for the gifted, is not expected to help out during this time of budget cuts.

"But what is the cost of not helping the gifted and talented?" asked University of North Carolina professors James J. Gallagher and Patricia Weiss.

"What is the cost of the medical discovery that's never made, the peace agreement never reached, the sonata never written? It is hard to put such losses into dollars, but we cannot think of these without the pain of sensing what might have been.'

List identifies traits that are associated with the gifted child

There are a number of lists that describe the characteristics of gifted children.

Few children display all the features on any list, but the Council for Exceptional Children, which drew up the list below, believes that these characteristics "constitute observable behaviors that can be thought of as clues to more specific behaviors."

- They typically read earlier, with better comprehension than other children their age.
- They learn basic skills better, faster and with less practice.
- They handle abstractions better than their classmates.
- They take less for granted, seeking out the hows and the whys.
- They can sustain longer periods of concentration and attention.
- Their interests are often both wildly eclectic and intensely focused.
- They frequently have seemingly boundless energy.
- They are usually able to respond well to adults and may prefer the company of older children.
- They are fluent thinkers, able to produce a large number of possibilities, consequences and related ideas.
- They are flexible thinkers, able to use many different alternatives to problem solving.
- They are original thinkers, seeking new and seemingly unrelated connections.
- They are elaborative thinkers, embellishing basic ideas.
- They show a willingness to think about complex ideas.
- They display intellectual playfulness, fantasize and imagine easily.
- They have a sensitivity to beauty.
- They have rapid insight into cause-effect relations.
- They are often skeptical, critical and evaluative.
- They attack complex material by separating it into parts and analyzing systematically.
- They have common sense.
- They are persistent and have a longer attention span.
- They are more independent and less subject to peer pressure
- They have a highly developed moral and ethical sense.

Second in a Series

June 3, 1981

Pinpointing the talented tests teachers' abilities

By Patricia Sullivan
Education Writer

For three years, John Heiden, 13, refused to accept the test results.

They said he was a scant two points short of being gifted.

John, an eighth-grader at Nova Middle School in Davie who loves to read and who is a pretty fair slugger on the school softball team, didn't believe the results and neither did his parents.

"It was almost a personal vendetta," his mother, Sissy, a part-time secretary to a podiatrist, said regarding his dogged pursuit to get in a gifted class. "I don't think he ever would have been happy if he hadn't made it."

He did. In May.

John could be called "borderline gifted." He's the kind of student often overlooked in the classrooms of Florida — the hard worker, obviously bright, but not the kind of superstar performer that a student with an IQ of 170 tends to become.

Local and state officials say there are many students like John who are never declared gifted, mostly because teachers don't know what to look for.

Three years ago, when he took the test to get into a gifted class at the end of summer, his score was two points short of the cutoff. John wanted to take the test again, but he thought he had to wait until a teacher recommended him a second time.

Meanwhile, he stayed in the regular and advanced classes, working hard but growing restless.

"I knew all the (basic) skills, but they just kept piling the work on. We had to go over and over the same material until everybody got it. I wouldn't say I was bored but — I really wanted to get in (the gifted class)," he said, squinting slightly behind his glasses and nervously clasping his hands.

"He's self-motivated. His idea of excitement is to read an encyclopedia. (The gifted class) gives him a little more incentive. If a kid can do 12th grade math, why keep him at an eighth-grade level? He can advance, so why shouldn't he?" said Mrs. Heiden of Pembroke Pines.

A few months ago, John learned by accident that he didn't have to wait for a teacher's nomination to take the intelligence test again. He immediately nominated himself and re-took the test. Shortly thereafter, he got a call from the school psychologist.

"He informed me I had just made it, by the skin of my teeth," John said, grinning.

John ended up in a gifted class because of his initiative.

But how do schools normally find gifted kids?

The Gifted:
A class of their own

Staff photo by [illegible]

The efforts of John Heiden, 13, to enter gifted class at Nova Middle School paid off.

Sometimes they don't. Nine of Florida's 67 county school districts told the state Department of Education last fall that they could not find a single gifted child in their schools. Three other counties found fewer than seven gifted children in their districts, and each of those was a non-Hispanic, white child.

Most of the districts depend upon teacher referrals. The regular classroom teacher is supposed to spot a child who is performing better than anyone else, or who shows signs that he or she is exceptionally insightful, creative, skilled or advanced in any way. The teacher suggests an intelligence test.

But, as John's case shows, that doesn't always work. It didn't work for MichaelTaylor, a sixth-grader at Nova Middle School, either. Michael nominated himself for testing, too.

"I saw my friend go in (the program), and I figured if Lee could do it, so could I," said Michael. He was right. He's now in the gifted program.

Educators therefore see the teacher's awareness of gifted children as crucial. Starting with the 1982-83 school year, teachers of the gifted in Florida will have to have special teaching certificates. That will help in the classroom, but regular teachers have to be reached, too. So, many teachers are calling for counties to have more in-service training for the "regular" classroom teacher as well.

"Basically, we pick people who are like us as gifted," noted Diane Grybeck, director of gifted students in Hillsborough County (Tampa). "If you respond well to me, you must be quite intelligent."

The director of gifted programs in Gadsden County in the Florida Panhandle agreed. That county, with a student population that is 80 percent black, has only 15 blacks in its 72-student gifted program, according to state figures.

"Referrals start with teachers, and teachers, even black teachers, have succeeded by conforming to white, middle-class norms," she said. "If they don't refer, we don't evaluate. And if we don't evaluate, we don't identify."

But if the students are spotted and sent for testing, there's another barrier to hurdle. It's called the standardized intelligence test and in Florida, it is usually either the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children — Revised or the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale.

The debate over the racial and cultural bias of the WISC-R and the Stanford-Binet has raged for years, with defenders of the tests saying, essentially, these are the best available, and detractors saying, in short, that the entire test was based on the white, middle-class child, and unless a student has that background, his or her score will be lower.

School officials know there are problems with the tests.

"Yes, this is a prejudiced test," said Hillsborough County's Grybeck. "It was based on urban kids, so not only does it squeeze out minority students, but I've seen it squeeze out rural children as well."

Educators see the teacher's awareness of gifted children as crucial. Starting with the 1982-83 school year, teachers of the gifted in Florida must have special teaching certificates.

But there is an alternative. It's called the SOMPA — System of Multicultural Pluralistic Assessment. It's more of a profile than a test, and it incorporates the WISC-R as one of its sub-tests.

"It's worthwhile, but it's time-consuming," said Joyce Runyon, the state consultant for the gifted. "You're talking about several days to visit the home, test physical dexterity, do the medical history, talk to the teachers. You spend only two or three hours doing a standard IQ test."

Nevertheless, with state encouragement, 18 counties tried the SOMPA last year, and of the 120 students tested, 62 qualified for gifted programs — a good response, Runyon said.

"The benefits in the long run are worth the effort," she added.

But for the student trying to wind his or her way through the bureaucracy to a gifted class, there is a second requirement. Students have to have a majority of "gifted characteristics," traits attributed to bright students by researchers who observe them.

No student is expected to have all the traits, but to get into Florida gifted programs, students have to have most of them. They range from "can be the biggest nuisance" to "shows high level of sensitivity and empathy."

"Those lists are so broad it's ridiculous," said one teacher of the gifted in Broward County. "Like 'has a sense of humor.' What kid doesn't have a sense of humor?"

The state's third requirement for calling a student gifted is that there must be a demonstrated need for a special program. But leaders in parent groups across the state said that if a child is discovered to be gifted, they will discover a need for a special program in that child.

The problem of finding gifted students, even in a state which has a very narrow definition of gifted, is so big that schools have not yet even begun to deal with the search for gifted migrant or handicapped students.

"Migrants? By the time somebody thinks about evaluating those kids and it gets through the process, the parents have probably moved on to where the next crop's growing," said state consultant Runyon.

Handicapped students are not classified within gifted programs, so it's difficult to know how many are in gifted classes, Runyon said. Those that are there are usually students with physical disabilities, such as blindness or the wheelchair-bound.

As more immigrants from Central and South American countries and the Caribbean islands enter Florida, officials expect a growing number of Spanish-speaking gifted youngsters. Although there are intelligence tests in Spanish, culture does not always translate as well as words.

Javier Furniz, a spark plug with bright eyes and a natural swagger, is a good example.

The young Cuban third-grader is a natural leader in his Pembroke Park math class.

"You, you and me sit here," he ordered two older classmates who were participating in a math contest. "Okay, ready? Quiet, quiet, don't tell them the answers!"

Until a few months ago, nobody knew this small bundle of energy might be gifted. His scores on school achievement tests were high for the Hispanic students, but they were not high enough to make teachers recommend him for evaluation in the gifted program.

Javier was lucky. He was discovered during a search by a special federal program for potentially gifted minority students. After six months in the special federal project, he was tested early in May to see how he was doing. Javier qualified for the gifted program.

Minorities thrive in strive program

By Patricia Sullivan
Education Writer

Two dozen black and Hispanic students filed into the portable classroom, sat quietly in their seats, waited for instructions and didn't challenge the answers given by their classmates.

The perfect class?

Not for Lake Forest Elementary School teacher Sherry Starcher and counselor Patricia Patterson.

"When you want them to think for themselves, to be more creative, you almost want them to go to the opposite extreme," said Ms. Starcher. "You want them to say, 'I want to go after this.' You want them to strive."

Strive, as the beautiful fifth-grader Nicole Minnis will tell visitors, means "to try harder." That's what the students are there for — STRIVE, an experimental program set up this year with a $78,000 federal grant.

Despite its promising results, the program at the Hollywood school has been all but ignored by the School Board and top district officials, according to Ms. Patterson.

The idea of the program is to take 24 high-achieving minority youngsters in grades one to five, treat them as if they were gifted and see if their test scores rise enough for them to be called gifted by the state.

Staff photo by [illegible]

Lake Forest Elementary students Leo Nesmith, fifth grade, and Allen Chao, fourth grade, demonstrate their chess skills.

Preliminary results seem to show that it works.

All 24 children have been retested for the first time after six months of the daily classes. All of them raised their scores on the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised and five qualified for the gifted program. The other 19 gained significantly. One student's score jumped 21 points.

"The psychological community's assumption is that you cannot raise (intelligence) test scores," said counselor Patterson, because the

Fourth-grader Letitia Price gives serious thought to her next move.

test is supposed to measure intelligence, which presumably does not change from one month to the next. But the early results seem to contradict that assumption.

The students, however, are not just any kids pulled off the streets of the nearby ghettos of Lake Forest and Carver Ranches. They scored in the top 20 percent of the regular state achievement tests.

Gifted students are usually drawn from the top 10 percent, but because there were not very many black and Hispanic youngsters who scored that high, Ms. Patterson and Ms. Starcher widened the range. None of the students in the program had previously qualified to be in any gifted program in the school system.

"We treat them as if they were gifted," said counselor Patterson, and that treatment has "brought the students out of their silent, protective shells."

"When they first started, they wouldn't give more than one-word answers," said teacher Starcher. "Drawing the city of the future, what they came up with was McDonald's in the sky, Byron's (department store) in the sky."

One morning last month, the students were anything but silent. They were working on simple machines — wedges, levers, inclined planes — and they were talking about the importance of machines.

"If you had a choice, would you want a machine that makes you smarter, one that makes you live longer or one that makes you rich?" asked the teacher.

"Live longer," said a soft-spoken black girl. "I'm already smart. I don't care if I'm rich or poor. But if I live longer, I'll get to see parts of the world where I never been before."

Her deskmate agreed: "I could go to college and get smarter and get a job and get richer. But if I get sick and die, I won't have any of that."

"There's been no problems with their behavior here carrying back to the regular classroom," Ms. Starcher said, acknowledging that some teachers don't like to have their students working on problems together or not raising their hands.

"They seem to know the difference in the classes, except maybe they're more willing to give answers now. They want to tell what's inside them. But they still want to give perfect answers. They want to be right, so they'll go for that one safe answer instead of taking a risk."

Getting more black and Hispanic students in the gifted program is the point behind the STRIVE experiment. The question is critical all over the state, but it's particularly important in Broward County, where only 143 blacks and 56 Hispanics are among the 3,933 students identified as gifted. The student population is 23 percent black.

The two women admit they "came out of nowhere" with their proposal for the federal grant after they started hearing rumors that the county was going to lower the standards for the gifted program to get more minorities in it.

"We totally disagreed with that and . . . we wanted to prove these kids could do it," said Ms. Patterson.

But there hasn't been much support, she says.

"Not a single School Board member has come out to look at this program. The director of special projects has never come out to look at this program . . . STRIVE has been invited to come down and train Dade County teachers, but nobody here in Broward County has heard of us," she said.

She did run a workshop for some Broward teachers during an in-service training day, but she missed all the middle school gifted teachers, because they were required to attend an assertive discipline workshop.

But the response from others has been good, Ms. Patterson said.

"We have tremendous parent support. We've turned out 100 percent of our parents at a meeting at the school, and we've done it twice. Now they're telling their friends how happy they are with the program and those parents are calling, asking if they can get their children in it."

Not this year and maybe not next year. The women want to keep the program going, but they're not sure if the federal money will be there next fall.

But they still have confidence in the program and in the still-incomplete results.

"I believe this is marketable and transportable," Ms. Patterson said.

History provides ironic lesson on detecting genius

History chronicles many gifted people who rose to the top on their own and overcame obstacles without the help of special programs in schools.

Hillsborough County gifted program coordinator Diane Gryback collected some vignettes about them, "begging the question of what unknown names might have been on (this list), but did not survive society."

Her list follows:

● Louisa May Alcott, author of *Little Women*, was told by an editor she could never write anything with popular appeal.

● A music teacher told Enrico Caruso, the great Italian tenor, "You can't sing. You have no voice at all."

● Walt Disney was fired from his job as a newspaper cartoonist because an editor said he had no good ideas.

● Abraham Lincoln entered the Black Hawk War as a captain and left as a private.

● Louis Pasteur was rated mediocre in his Royal College chemistry courses.

● "As a composer, he is hopeless," a music teacher said of Ludwig von Beethoven.

● I.W. Woolworth got a job in a drygoods store at age 21, but his boss wouldn't let him wait on customers because he did not have enough sense.

● Werner von Braun, the rocket pioneer, flunked ninth-grade algebra.

● Edward Gibbon, author of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, considered his education a waste of time.

● Four years old before he could speak, 7 before he could read, a young boy who found grammar school boring had his interest in mathematics stimulated by his uncle, who showed him some number tricks. The boy's name was Albert Einstein.

Third in a Series

June 4, 1981

What works in teaching the gifted depends on who's making it work

By Patricia Sullivan
Education Writer

The Gifted:
A class of their own

The First-graders leaned forward with interest as their teacher began to explain the new "brainteaser" chart.

Anticipation glowed in their eyes. The entire gifted class had finished the old chart full of academic riddles, and this new one looked challenging.

Eight 7-year-olds inched forward.

"Everybody back in the seats," the teacher ordered sharply.

The children wiggled backwards, temporarily admonished.

A few minutes later, a particularly perceptive comment by one boy started his classmates bouncing in their seats, eager to add their comments.

With a cold, level stare and her second set of icy commands in 10 minutes, the teacher demolished the excitement and enthusiasm of her students for the rest of the morning.

Spring had come to North Florida that day, and the broad avenues of the city were bursting with blossoms on the trees and bushes. The children had been bursting with ideas and reactions, but they died on the vine when the teacher refused to gather them.

"I really don't like to teach children this young," the teacher confided later, as the students quietly trooped out of the classroom.

The teacher had been assigned to the class. She had taught gifted students before, but never ones this young.

"Their attention span is too short, and you have to have a myriad of activities. I really think they're too young for gifted classes."

Four days later and six hours south, a parent in a different school district said those sort of incidents — disinterested teachers and inflexible teaching methods — are far too common. The quality of what goes on in the classroom depends upon what classroom it is.

"What it all boils down to is the principal and the teacher," said the parent, Maureen Toler, president of the Broward County Chapter of the Florida Association for the Gifted. "Otherwise forget it. If it weren't for those two, we wouldn't have the programs we have now."

What works seems to depend on who is making it work.

Usually it's the teacher. But until now, teachers of the gifted generally have been those who were "rewarded" for good work in a regular classroom with a class full of bright students.

"I don't think every teacher has a God-given right to a gifted child," said Dorothy Sisk, former director of the federal Office for Gifted and Talented, now the director of gifted teacher education at the University of South Florida in Tampa.

"It's not easy to teach gifted children. They ask teachers to do more than they would normally do. They question the socks off you. They intimidate you half to death," she said.

As a result of intense lobbying by the Florida Association for the Gifted, teachers of the gifted have to be specially certified at the start of the 1982-1983 school year. They will have to have a class in the nature and needs of the gifted, in educational procedures and curriculum for the gifted and in guidance and counseling of gifted children.

Officials say that will be a big step toward improving gifted classes in the state, but there's no lesson like the lessons teachers learn in the classroom.

"The hardest thing to teach a teacher to be comfortable with is that everybody does not have to do the same thing. It's all right to differentiate the curriculum," Dr. Sisk said.

Normal lessons stopped at Parkwood Heights Elementary School in Jacksonville one day when a student in the gifted class interrupted work to ask what the old gas heater in the middle of the room did.

Teacher Elizabeth Bacalis, knowing a teaching opportunity when she saw one, took the class to the school custodian's office for an answer.

The janitor was so pleased to have a class of children interested in his work, Mrs. Bacalis said, that he took the gifted class on a neck-craning tour of the pipes and ducts in the ceiling of the school.

That tour led to more interest in the old schoolhouse that serves as the portable building for the gifted class.

Students, upon discovering that their school used to be the city's school for black children, decided to write a history book about the building. It took a year, but the book was written, illustrated and printed — a task which involved English, art and managment skills.

But allowing teachers to let students do different things can lead to abuses as well. Dr. Sisk remembers a California teacher who proudly said he was exposing students to different experiences by one day taking them to a numerologist, another day watching a dog have a hysterectomy and the third day observing a man launching a kayak.

"He couldn't explain how those three lessons were related," Dr. Sisk observed dryly.

But teachers are not the only factor in making a class for the gifted work.

"Younger students seem to need more structure," said a middle-aged teacher who has been in and out of gifted classes for the last five years. "They want the hands-on activities in small groups, but somebody has to tell them when to go on to something else.

"The older students, in junior high and senior high, develop that discipline. They do much better on independent study, because by then they have specialized interests," he said.

What works seems to depend upon what results are sought.

"For people who are motivated and want to do the work, this is necessary," said Joe Parrish, 17, a Miami super-achiever aiming for a seat in the freshman class at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He's doing a complex bibliography for the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration and spends part of his day with the top professionals in the business.

Margaret Terry, who shares a portable building with another teacher of the gifted at J.C. Mitchell Elementary School in Boca Raton, said having students in for part of the day gives them specialized attention, but it also forces the students to deal with the rest of the world.

"The biggest thing we can give these kids is the chance to interact with students of their own abilities," she said, sitting beneath a display which said, "The gifted are not better, they are just different."

Todd Weiner, a Sixth-grader at Davie's Nova Middle School, might agree.

"Most of the kids in these classes are more mature, and it's easier to have discussions," he said. "In other classes, the textbooks have all the answers. Here, you have to go to different sources and research for the answers."

Special to the Sun-Sentinel

Banae Gerstman takes studied look at starfish.

In the moneyed oceanfront town of Palm Beach, Dale Neuenschwander instructs a classroom of gifted students all day long in a school with an otherwise regular curriculum.

"I'm delighted when any district does anything for its special children," she began. "But I think if you're going to have a full-time program, you ought to make it a center. . . . It's very difficult to have a full-time program in the middle of a regular school. We have to teach the basics as well as enrichment and acceleration, and that's a lot for one classroom to do."

Enrichment is what the resource centers in the state propose to provide — a chance for students to reach out and expand on what they do in the regular classroom.

"Let's say a class is studying the Mayans," said Dorothy Sisk. "Why not have the gifted children study the Mayans in depth? Have them take a look at their water system, their religious beliefs in-depth, then put on a show with the rest of the school?"

Acceleration is the old American way of dealing with gifted students — have them skip a grade or two.

There are signs that acceleration, out of favor during the 1960s and 1970s, may be revived.

"There are some children who have never been children," said Dr. Sisk, describing a boy who was so far ahead of his peers in science that he couldn't converse with them. "I have a feeling he will always be a total isolate. One of the most cruel things we could have done was to keep him in a class with other 8-year-olds."

In Florida, there is a full range of choices. So what works? According to the experts:

The Gifted:
A class of their own

- If the student knows what he or she wants, independent study with a teacher or professional to guide the work.
- If the student is younger and interested in several areas, a structured program with depth explorations of different subjects seems to work.
- If the student is younger still, programs which focus on exposing the wide range of choices will get students started.

Teachers also warn that even these pint-sized geniuses need a strong background in the basics. No one is born, they note, knowing the difference between a verb and an adverb.

"After all," said John Grossi of the Council for Exceptional Children in Reston, Va., "gifted kids are children first and gifted second."

Special to the Sun-Sentinel

Pine View is the extreme in gifted education—a school set up solely for the gifted and limited exclusively to them.

Sarasota's Pine View: one of a kind

By Patricia Sullivan
Education Writer

This is the kind of school which names its buildings "Leonard Bernstein," "Sir Isaac Newton" and "Dunford's Domain" instead of building A, B and C.

Under the pine trees in this shady island of academia, students read philosophy on their lunch break between games of basketball.

This is a one-of-a-kind school in Florida — Sarasota's Pine View School for academically gifted students.

Everyone passed the state's functional literacy test here last year. Average attendance runs 98 percent. Only two students in the 500-member student body were suspended last year. The school had nine finalists, 13 semi-finalists and 12 commended for the National Merit Scholarship Program last year.

Students have to be gifted to get in, and if you're gifted in Sarasota County, there are no other programs for 4th- to 12th-graders.

Pine View is the extreme in gifted education — a school set up solely for gifted students and limited exclusively to them. Even though it's been around for 13 years, the idea and existence of Pine View is still controversial.

"It's isolationist in the extreme," said a teacher at one of the three schools surrounding the Pine View campus. "Those kids go in there in fourth grade and come out at the end of high school not knowing how to deal with the rest of the students."

The principal of Pine View, John Woolever, vigorously denies that. The students at Pine View go to some classes at the nearby schools, they take part in the plays, athletics and publications of the other schools. The schools sponsor joint activities, he said.

The school is at once intense and laid-back. Pine cones snap underfoot during a stroll through the campus. Machine gun bursts of conversation shoot out from the open windows of the wooden portable classrooms. Everything is rapid-fire — the thinking, the reading, the conversational pace.

"The pressure is not really to compete, it's to keep up," said 10th-grader Nimie Stewart.

"There's a lot of freedom," said Greg Bard, also a 10th-grade student. "We eat wherever we want."

They eat where they want because there is no cafeteria at Pine View. There are no organized sports, woodshops, laboratories or libraries either. The students can use the facilities and join the organizations at any of the nearby schools, Sarasota High, Sarasota Junior High or Alta Vista Elementary.

What they do get is an undeniably good education. The teachers have degrees in the fields they teach, not in education. The students start foreign languages in fourth grade. There are non-credit courses for everything from embroidery and auto mechanics to advanced calculus.

There's a professional experience program in which a student can spend time with a working person while going to school. There's also early entrance to college available, and some students remain at Pine View while taking college classes.

But the students are also aware of the main criticism of their school, the charge that it unnecessarily isolates them.

"My friend on the bus hates it when we use the same book she does, because she's in seventh grade and we're in fifth," said Chrissy Burns, sitting on wooden bleachers outside the classrooms. "It's really horrible the way they resent you for what you are."

"I've had people walk away from me because of it. They think of brains and glasses and eggheads. People lie and say they go to Riverview instead of admitting they go here," said Greg Bard. "You miss out on a lot of social things, too. At the (Sarasota) high school, there's always parties going on, and there are a lot more girls."

Amy Jo Luetzow, a physically mature and well-dressed high school junior, objected.

"I don't think I could go out with anybody from Pine View. I've been with most of these guys since fourth grade. It would be like going out with your brother," she said.

The boys looked pained.

There's just about as many girls as boys at the school. Only 17 of the 501 students last year were minorities — that includes Asians, Hispanics and blacks. Only four or five of the students this year are black, the principal said.

The student body is also solidly middle and upper middle class. Only 12 students were eligible for free or reduced price lunches, Woolever said.

"One reason (that there are so few black students) is that there is a magnet school program within the black community," he said. "They've been promoting it for years, and blacks identify with it . . . unless you have a certain personality, you would want to go where there are a lot of other blacks."

Although there have been many visitors, there have been few imitators of Pine View over the years. Woolever credits that to the fact that Sarasota County had an "ideal" setup for the all-gifted school.

"The geographical and physical circumstances are in our favor," he said. "We're right next to the bus barn so it's easy to bring in students from all over the county. We're in the middle of other schools, so we can use their facilities."

He also requires teachers to teach for six periods each day, one more than most Sarasota County teachers. Teachers are also required to have at least two lesson plans.

"These kids have grasshopper minds," Woolever said in explanation. "We're training them for jobs that don't even exist yet. We have to be an opportunity for these children to have as many experiences as possible in a short time."

For the brightest, Miami has the best

By Patricia Sullivan
Education Writer

The frail, bespectacled youth huddled over the computer terminal at Miami-Dade Community College, working out a complicated math equation involving logarithms, equivalents and numbers extending five digits to the right of a decimal.

Elbow-to-elbow with a young black woman working on her associate's degree and an elderly Jewish man picking up a new skill, the boy raided the "games" part of the computer memory for more complicated mathematical challenges.

"Hey, cool," he muttered in admiring tones as one game proved too difficult for him. Suddenly he bolted upright.

"My bus!" It was an adolescent exclamation, and before the rest of those in the computer center could look up from their machines, the boy was gone, in a flurry of preteen punctuality.

The boy was one of 225 junior high school students going to school once a week at Miami-Dade Community College's north campus as part of the Dade County gifted program.

Despite Miami's image as a drug smuggler's paradise, the crime capital of the Caribbean, a hedonist's holiday retreat and refuge for Cubans and Haitians, for the gifted it's a mecca.

If you're looking for choices, go to Dade County.

School officials there have set up, over the past 24 years, a dazzling array of programs for the gifted not matched anywhere else in the state.

"Our program offerings are almost equivalent to what is offered in many states," boasts Jim Miley, gifted coordinator for Dade County schools.

He may be right, because there is not much that Dade does not have. What it does have are choices, on every level, for students who are willing to leave their home schools.

Elementary school students can go twice a week to one of 13 learning centers scattered around the county for "planning, critical and creative thinking, independence . . . and service in the areas in which students have exceptional abilities."

Staff photo by Bob Eas

Jerry Parrish, a Miami senior, works on a computer program for cardiac patients.

Junior high school students have four choices: to attend a center once a week, go to a senior high school for classes once a week, spend an hour each day in their own school's resource center or go to Miami-Dade Community College once a week for special programs and a chance to use M-DCC's research facilities.

Joyce Cash, a blonde Seventh-grader who spent the morning in a college lecture on biofeedback and the afternoon working out the electronic technicalities needed to produce a radio play for the class, said she could never expect to get this sort of exposure at her North Dade junior high.

"If we act like adults, people here treat us like adults," she said over corned beef and cabbage in the cafeteria. "But some of the kids here are really too immature for this."

As they grow more mature and graduate to senior high school, Joyce and her classmates will have more choices:

● The community laboratory research program where students get class credit for working 7 to 20 hours in the afternoon in scientific research all over town.

● The student leadership development program, where high school juniors and seniors work full-time for 18 weeks with legislators, business people and service industries.

● The colloquium one hour each day at their home schools, where they discuss philosophy.

Jerry Parrish, a senior at Miami Lakes High School, opted for the lab research program. He's working on a computer program at the Jackson Memorial Hospital to develop an individualized system of data entry for cardiac patients.

"It's terrific. I'm working with doctors and nurses, and it gives me an idea of what I want to do with my career," he said. "It's a job, but it's better than Burger King."

His supervisor, Dr. Jerry Augenstein, said he was happy to let Jerry and other students in the lab "flex their intellectual muscles."

"It's one of the real high points of my educational experience to work with these young people," Augenstein said. "They're at the level in their lives when they're exploding. Their knowlege isn't progressive, it's exponential. We're part of their change and part of their exposure to the world."

Across the expressways, over the sprouting skyline and beyond Biscayne Bay lies the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, where you'll find Jerry's identical twin, Joe.

Joe Parrish spent last summer tagging sharks and the year before doing a dolphin behavioral study. This year, he's doing the relatively tame work of doing an annotated bibliography of marine biology experiments.

"It's a good program for somebody who doesn't want to spend the summer on the beach," Joe said.

"I'm getting to do things that normally would be research for college or graduate students."

The work is perfect for gifted students in science who have outpaced their classes.

"Nothing they throw at you in high school is like this. Here, you have to start learning like you're a first-grader, and that knocks you down a few pegs. Here, there's definitely ways to challenge me. There's no way I can feel I know it all," the high school senior said.

And, while he's waiting for his college acceptance letters, what does he plan to do this summer?

"I think I'll spend the summer on the beach," he said with a wicked grin.

Fourth in a Series

June 5, 1981

For gifted and their mentors: 'Adapt or die'

By Patricia Sullivan
Education Writer

Jason Robinson and Eddie Gonzalez, 10-year-old buddies, were looking forward to their gifted math class.

"I think it's neat. You get to try out all sorts of ideas," said Eddie.

"I think it's real fun. You get to draw in geometry," said Jason.

Their teachers, Margaret Terry and Libby Gresch, were looking ahead, too. But they were thinking about the start of the 21st century, when Jason and Eddie will be 30 years old.

"I think the main thing we can do is to help them be flexible and accept change," said Mrs. Terry, teacher of the gifted at the J.C. Mitchell Elementary School in Boca Raton.

The Gifted:
A class of their own

"They'll have to be able to look at the problems that are around then and be able to find more than one solution to the problems . . . you have to have research skills. You don't have to know the answer to everything, but you have to know where to find those answers," she said.

The task of the future for gifted education may be the ages-old dictum 'adapt or die.' The state's gifted programs, parents and professionals say, will have to find and attract more students, particularly minority students, improve in quality, broaden in definition and keep better track of each other and their former students.

One of the first changes which ought to be made, according to Hillsborough County gifted director Diane Grybeck, is the way schools are still training students for what she calls "Bob Cratchit" jobs.

"Our classes are still geared to the 19th century — sitting quietly all day and copying numbers. What kind of jobs will our students have that they have to do that?" she asked.

The artists of the world have never done that, and state Rep. Walter D. Young, D-Hollywood, introduced a bill into the state House this spring to include artistically talented students in the areas of music, visual arts, drama and

Special to the Sun-Sentinel

Tommy and Anabel Chen, Sandy Springer, teacher Prof. Payne at Tampa Library

[illegible]

Howard Bass, left, and Miles Hartnett of Tampa look over 'archeological finds.'

dance within the state's definition of gifted.

"I feel we're missing an awful lot of creative people who are artistically inclined and a great number of people who might be able to contribute to our society," said Young, the chairman of the House K-12 Education Committee.

"There has been a demonstrated interest among parents to have a special program for talented as well as for academically gifted students, since (talented) is part of the definition at the federal level," said Etoyal Yelverton, president of the Florida Assocatic.ı for the Gifted.

Young's bill, which died in his own committee last year, got out of the K-12 Committee several weeks ago and has been mired in the House Appropriations Committee since April 16. Young is not optimistic about its fate — mostly because the measure would cost $9 million at a time when legislators are trying to put extra money into law enforcement and transportation.

Opposition popped up in early March. A parents' newsletter on the Gulf Coast attacked the proposal.

"Gifted has an accepted definition and is limited essentially to the top 2 percent intellectually on the basis of standard tests. For 'talented' there are no such tests or definition. Talented is essentially unlimited and exists, to some degree, only in the eye of the beholder or individual person advocate.

"If these people are to be funded under the gifted program, as has been proposed, our children would probably suffer a loss of funds and even bigger classes," said editor Harlan Johnson in the March 10 "Pine Views" from Sarasota.

Whether the talented bill passes or not, gifted education in the state is expected to become more evenly distributed.

State consultant Runyon said some school districts which have not identified students in the past are realizing that a gifted student is worth 2.6 times as much state money as a student in a regular class. Simply finding those students will mean more money for the counties.

"One of the frustrations I have is that our programs are not continuous," said Dorothy Sisk of the University of South Florida and former director of the U.S. Office of Gifted and Talented. "Because of state funding, there's a feeling that a child is only gifted for 12 hours a week."

And, she might have added, only from kindergarten to 10th grade, since some school districts end their gifted programs there. Advanced placement courses in high schools are expected to take up the slack.

"We're working on quality, not quantity," said Joyce Runyon, the state consultant for the gifted. "We've got the programs."

Florida does have the programs, but they are scattered all over the state. The teacher of the self-contained class in Palm Beach County doesn't know about the mentorship program in Citrus County. The principal of the all-gifted school in Sarasota is unfamiliar with the federal pilot program in Broward County.

The coordination is left to the state consultant and the organization of parents and administrators, the Florida Association for the Gifted.

Palm Beach County schools Superintendent Thomas Mills said his county will be more actively searching for black and other minority students in the next few years. His counterpart in Broward County, William McFatter, said that the hiring of a gifted coordinator ought to solve many of the district's problems in gifted education. Both say the counties are fully committed to providing more and better education for gifted students.

Research is going on in four counties to try to figure out the best way to teach gifted kids. A $50,000 grant from the federal Office of Gifted and Talented was given to the state, then awarded on a competitive basis to Dade, Duval, Pinellas and Polk Counties for research into curriculum design. In the past, educators have studied gifted programs for pre-elementary school students.

"We need more research into the follow-up of our gifted students," suggested Dr. Yelverton of Duval County schools, "a longitudinal kind of study to have a better grasp of what is happening to them after they exit the public school system."

A new state law requiring teachers of the gifted to be specially certified is considered a step forward, but teachers who have been in gifted classes for two years will be grandfathered in.

Teachers say regular classroom teachers could benefit from a few training sessions on how to spot a gifted child in class, why special programs are necessary for them and special problems the bright students encounter.

Parents, too, have started to be trained in Jacksonville, where officials believe that they have to know enough about their children's gifts to be able to encourage and support their pursuits.

The discovery of the gifted minority child is picking up, with steady statewide increases over the past few years in the numbers of black and Hispanic students identified as gifted. The state still has a long way to go before the minority population in gifted education matches the minority population in the rest of the student body, statistics show.

"I think we're seeing more mass

screening for gifted than we have in the past. We are seeing an increase in enrollment and a growing awareness across the state of the uniqueness of the gifted child," said Dr. Yelverton.

State colleges and universities are starting to get involved in programs for gifted students by participating in the Governor's Summer Program for Gifted and Talented Students. Miss Runyon counted 15 different schools with special summer programs for the youth.

"We want to be serving all designs for each student's need in any area of gifted and talented," said Miss Runyon. "I think we're getting closer."

Broward succeeds, but then it falters

By Patricia Sullivan
Education Writer

The battle of four schools of psychological thought was fought in the Margate Public Library three years ago before an audience of gifted high school seniors.

Four psychologists, each representing a different philosophy within the field of psychology, discussed their approaches to a certain problem — why it occurred, what it meant and how to treat it.

The students heard each of the arguments, questioned each speaker in depth, talked about the advantages and disadvantages to each approach and left the all-day conference with some insight into different ways to consider the same problem.

They also left raving about the session and hoping it would be repeated.

"But it disintegrated," recalled Rosemary Timoney, gifted teacher at Northeast High School. "It was a one-shot deal, but it was really an excellent effort."

The attempt at an innovative gifted session was representative of Broward County's approach to gifted student education — a few fine programs, some success and then a lack of coordination which could make the success continue.

Although Broward has identified more gifted students than any other county in the state, there is no director or coordinator of gifted programs for the whole county.

Fay Clark, the director of exceptional student education, said that will be corrected soon. A job description finally was drawn up and approved in February, and applicant interviews will begin soon.

We would expect things to improve quite a bit when we get this person hired," Clark said. "But just because there is a (district) administrator doesn't mean all our problems will be solved."

The parents organization would certainly agree with that.

"No emphasis is placed in the area. Too many principals are into the 'back-to-basics,' " said Maureen Toler, president of the Broward County Chapter of the Florida Association for the Gifted (FLAG). "If it weren't for the teachers and if it weren't for the parents, you wouldn't have the programs we have now."

Broward has a school-based management system, which means that the principal is the person in charge of the school. If the principal supports the idea of gifted programs, he's likely to have a good gifted class. If he doesn't believe in it, there may be little or no program available

"Some schools have only a library table for a place for gifted kids," said Mrs. Toler.

THE FELLOWS IN EDUCATIONAL JOURNALISM

Since 1976 The Institute for Educational Leadership has administered a Journalism Fellowship Program which enables reporters to conduct national studies of education issues important in their area. Journalists who have participated in this Fellowship and their study topics are listed below.

FORD FELLOWS IN EDUCATIONAL JOURNALISM
1976

Name	News Organization	Study Topic
David Bednarek	*The Milwaukee Journal* Milwaukee, WI	Desegregation
Michael Bowler	*The Sun* Baltimore, MD	Textbook Selection
Helen Carringer	*The Beacon Journal* Akron, OH	Parent Power
James A. Killacky	*The Daily Oklahoman* Oklahoma City, OK	Teacher Unions
Jacquelyn King	WRR News Radio Dallas, TX	Testing
Andrew Miller	*The Kansas City Star* Kansas City, KS	Testing
Lael Morgan	*Tundra Times* Fairbanks, AK	Bilingual Education
Linda Stahl	*The Courier-Journal* Louisville, KY	Basic Skills
Stanley Wellborn	*U.S. News & World Report* Washington, DC	Federal Education Policy

FORD FELLOWS IN EDUCATIONAL JOURNALISM
1977

Name	News Organization	Study Topic
Constantine Angelos	*The Seattle Times* Seattle, WA	Basic Skills
Muriel Cohen	*The Boston Globe* Boston, MA	Teacher Education
Rebecca Kuzins	*The Muskegon Chronicle* Muskegon, MI	Special Education
Lorenzo Middleton, Jr.	*The Washington Star* Washington, DC	Desegregation
Cynthia Parsons	*The Christian Science Monitor* Boston, MA	School Finance
Wayne F. Reilly	*The Bangor Daily News* Bangor, ME	Competency Based Testing
Dale Alan Rice	*The Post-Standard* Syracuse, NY	Magnet Schools

FORD FELLOWS IN EDUCATIONAL JOURNALISM
1978

Name	News Organization	Study Topic
Huntly Collins	*The Oregonian* Portland, OR	Gifted & Talented Education
Jimmie Covington	*The Commercial Appeal* Memphis, TN	Competency Based Testing
Joe Donovan	KYW News Radio Philadelphia, PA	Basic Skills
Gary Fife	*United Indian Planners News* Washington, DC	Indian Education
Robert Frahm	*The Journal Times* Racine, WI	Competency Based Testing
Diane Granat	*Chicago Daily Herald* Arlington Heights, IL	Parent Power
Saundra Ivey	*The Tennessean* Nashville, TN	School Finance: Tax Revolt Issues

Rick Janka	*The Milwaukee Sentinel* Milwaukee, WI	Achieving Quality Education
Rosa Morales	KCET Television Los Angeles, CA	Desegregation
Ethel Payne	*St. Louis Sentinel* St. Louis, MO	Black Colleges
Donald Speich	*Los Angeles Times* Los Angeles, CA	Effect of Proposition 13
Monte Trammer	*The Baltimore Sun* Baltimore, MD	Declining Enrollments and School Closing
Linda Williams	*Daily Herald/South Mississippi Sun* Biloxi, MS	School Finance Patterns in the South

FORD FELLOWS IN EDUCATIONAL JOURNALISM
1979

Name	**News Organization**	**Study Topic**
Robert Benjamin	*Cincinnati Post* Cincinnati, OH	Educating Low-Income Students
John Cummins	*The Salt Lake Tribune* Salt Lake City, UT	Education in High-Growth Areas
Christie Dunphy	*The Evening Gazette* Worcester, MA	Declining Enrollment in High Schools
Charles Hardy	*The Charlotte Observer* Charlotte, NC	Black Achievement/ Operation Push
Wista Johnson	*The New York Amsterdam News* New York, NY	Health Education in Urban Schools
Mark Liff	*New York Daily News* New York, NY	Education of Indo-Chinese Refugee Children
Bette Orsini	*St. Petersburg Times* St. Petersburg, FL	Suicide/Depression on College Campuses
Barbara Reinhardt	*Options in Education* National Public Radio Washington, DC	Teenage Pregnancy and the Schools
Linda Wertsch	*Chicago Sun-Times* Chicago, IL	Teacher Accountability
Fran Zupan	*The Columbia Record* Columbia, SC	Sex Barriers in Job Preparation

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION FELLOWS IN EDUCATIONAL JOURNALISM
1979

Name	**News Organization**	**Study Topic**
Jane Eisner	*The Virginia-Pilot* Norfolk, VA	What's Effective in Virginia's Integrated Schools
Jack Kennedy	*The Lincoln Journal* Lincoln, NE	Rural vs. Consolidated School Districts: What's Effective in Nebraska
Janet Kolodzy	*Arkansas Democrat* Little Rock,AR	What's Effective in Arkansas Schools
Margo Pope	*The Florida Times-Union* Jacksonville, FL	What's Effective in Florida's Suburban Schools
Wayne Reilly	*Bangor Daily News* Bangor, ME	What's Effective in the Rural Schools of Maine
M. William Salganik	*The Sun* Baltimore, MD	Academic Achievement in Urban Schools: What Works in Baltimore
Robert Benjamin	*The Cincinnati Post* Cincinnati, OH	Towards Effective Urban Schools: A National Study